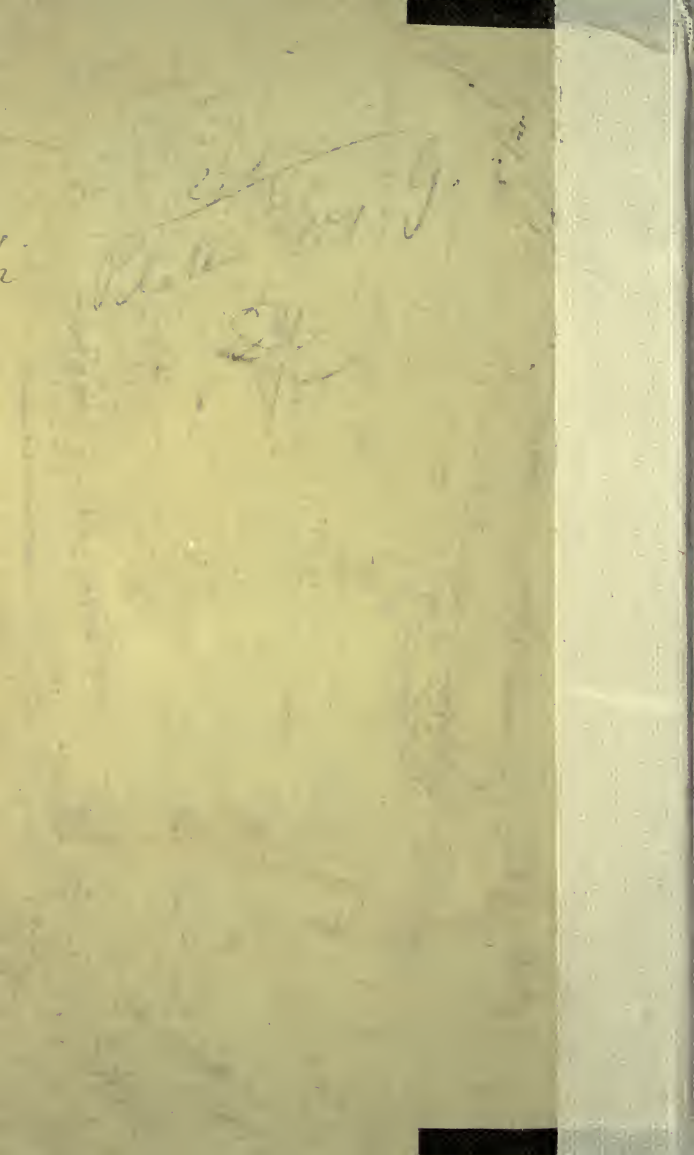




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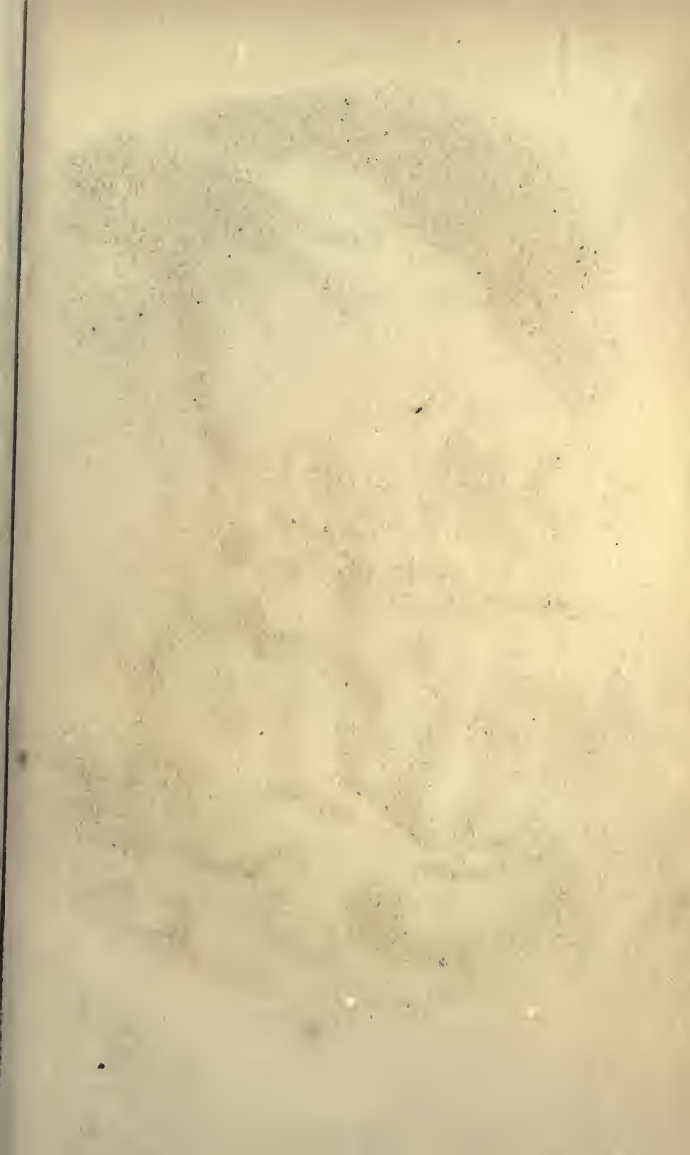
BEING A VERBAL INDEX TO ALL THE PASSAGES IN THE
DRAMATIC WORKS OF THE POET.

BY

MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

“Order gave each thing view.”
SHAKSPEARE.







George Cruikshank

Kit and the Merman's Family.

KIT BAM'S ADVENTURES;

OR, THE

YARNS OF AN OLD MARINER.

BY

MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

AUTHOR OF THE CONCORDANCE TO SHAKSPEARE.

Twere a pity
To stint the wondrous to the known, and leave
Imagination not a world to conquer.

We thus may welcome fresh true wonders,
Most Sinbad-like, nor give up dear astonishment.

I could hear such mixture
Of truth and fiction for a summer's day.

LEIGH HUNT.

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

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TO
JOHN AND EMILY ROLT,
BY THEIR FRIEND,
MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 310

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THE
STRANGE ADVENTURES
OF
KIT BAM, MARINER.

CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY AND INTRODUCTORY.

THE SWALLOW FAMILY; THE YOUNGER ONES' LOVE OF FICTION; THE ELDERS' OPINIONS OF FANCY AND MATTER-OF-FACT, IMAGINATION AND REALITIES.—KIT BAM; HIS FIRST YARN; THE ISLAND OF FALSE APPEARANCES.

“MAMMA,” said Dick Swallow to his mother one evening, during the holidays, “before the candles come, and Fanny and I have our game of chess together, I wish you’d tell us one of your famous long stories, as you used to do.”

“I fear, my dear boy,” replied his mother, “that you and your sister have exhausted my stock of ‘famous stories’ (as you are so polite as to call them) long ago; besides, you are too old now to care for stories, surely; you hope to go to college in a couple

of years, and are very often quite a man already, you know, in your own opinion."

"And yet, mother, I really think I shall never be too old to like a good long story," answered Dick. "In the first place, listening instead of reading, is such pleasant, lazy work—such complete rest, after a day's fag at Latin and Greek. And then, when the stories are about fairies, and spirits, and strange adventures, such as yours used to tell of, I feel as if they took me out of the horse-in-a-mill routine of books and study, which is all very right and useful, of course, and must be attended to, but which makes one long for amusement and rest—I mean rest for the thoughts and the head, as much as cricket, and rowing, and going to bed, are rest for the limbs after sitting many hours at lessons."

"I sometimes feel the same thing, Mamma;" said his sister Fanny; "I often wish I had one of your old stories of an evening to amuse me after lessons and my duty-walk are over; an interesting story is such pleasant rest; and, you know, I am not allowed to read novels yet—they are 'too old' for me, it is said."

"I know well your love of stories, my dears!" said their mother; "and I agree with you that there are few things afford so perfect a relaxation to the mind as fiction, and its pleasant appeals to the imagination. You, Dick, will soon form an acquaintance with the fine old poets; their lovely classical stories, and beautiful fancies, will prove a grand resource for you as a relief from severer studies; and you, my dear

Fanny, may, in a year or two, hope to enjoy with me those interesting fictions from the pen of some of our best authors, which have so well depicted the stage of human life, its various hopes, disappointments, aspirations, duties, and feelings; and which form a not inapt introduction to the world itself, where you will some day be called upon to act your part. But it is not well too early to anticipate the amusement and even instruction to be derived from such a course of reading; and, meantime, I will own that you are both deprived of a pleasant source of amusement, if it is decreed that you are 'too old' for the stories of your childhood, and that the Poets and Novelists are 'too old' for you. I have been thinking, therefore, that as my own story-telling powers are exhausted, I will endeavour to procure you another source of entertainment of the like kind, which may supply the want you feel; and that your favourite twilight hour may still be spent in the way you both love so well, in listening to a long story."

"Capital, mamma!" exclaimed both the young Swallows, joyfully, as they jumped up to give her a hearty kiss; for though Dick had nearly attained the manly age of fourteen, and his sister Fanny was but a year younger, yet they both frequently expressed their joy in a burst of childish rapture, and were generally as gay as larks. The nature of their education had made our two young friends simple in their manners, though sensible in their heads; their hearts were young, though their minds were strong, active, and well-stored. They had been brought up

under the superintendence of their mother, a woman of keen sensibilities, yet firm judgment. She had indulged their fancy, while she had secured solid instruction; and the result was, that, though Dick could construe Virgil, or work many of the problems in Euclid, and Fanny was a good modern linguist and an accomplished needlewoman and housekeeper, yet they both of them still loved a long twilight tale, and listened to it with all their old-young delight. They were child-like, though not childish, in taste and feeling; and their manners were unconventional, and unlike the little old men and women we now-a-days often meet with in young people of their age.

“Your father tells me he has invited his old ship-mate, Kit Bam, (of whom you have often heard him speak,) to come and spend the remainder of his days close by us,” resumed their mother; “the little cottage in the lane, just by the clump of beech trees, at the back of our grounds, has been prepared for him, and we expect that he will arrive from town to-day, and take possession of his new abode. Indeed, I should not wonder if it is the reception of his old friend which detains papa at this very moment, for it is much after his usual hour of return from his walk. I dare say he is now at the cottage welcoming his favourite Kit, and settling him in his new home. We will ask papa to go with us to-morrow morning to see his old friend, that we may make his acquaintance.”

“That will be pleasant!” said Dick.

“If *he* is pleasant,” added Fanny, in a lower tone. “Do you know Mr. Kit Bam, mamma?” enquired she. “Is he pleasant? Is he good-natured?”

“Very good-natured,” replied her mother; “and very pleasant—especially pleasant he will seem to you both; for he has seen a vast deal, and passed through a great many adventures in his time, so that he has plenty of long stories to tell—if you can coax him to relate them; and I know you have rather a knack in persuading those, from whom you have hopes of a story, Fanny.”

Next morning, forth the party sallied; the day was bright, the birds were singing cheerfully; the young people were in high spirits at the idea of the new acquaintance they were about to make; and their parents were happy in the thought that they had secured a comfortable asylum near them, and the enjoyment of complete repose in his old age, to one whose youth and maturer years had been faithfully employed in a course of active exertion, uncomplaining hardship, many perils, and ceaseless wandering. Across the lawn, skirting the fishpond, between the flower-beds, by the arbour, down the gravel-walk, along the avenue, out at the little wicket-gate, into the lane, all flowery with hedgerow climbers and plants—the honeysuckle, the dogrose, the hawthorn, the briony; and all bowery with hedge-row trees—the maple, the oak, the elm, and the ash; on passed the four walkers, till they came to a cottage in a small garden, that was screened off from the lane by a quickset hedge. Through a slight opening in this

ledge Captain Swallow looked, and beckoned to his wife that she should silently follow his example.

“Does not the dear old fellow look a perfect picture of contented comfort?” asked he in a whisper.

Dick and Fanny peeped too. Sitting on a bench in the sun, they saw an old man with grey hair, a very brown face, and still browner hands, which were folded carelessly together round a thick knotty stick, that lay between his knees. He wore coarse dark blue clothes that looked too big for him; indeed so big and so loose, that they appeared as if they would have held an additional set of legs and arms without any inconvenience to the limbs already there. On his head was a shiny glazed hat; so shiny that it made our young friends wink as they looked at it sparkling and glistening in the bright sun; but as it was worn perched very forward, it shaded the old man's own eyes, without his suffering any apparent annoyance from the ends of black ribbon which dangled from its brim, and occasionally fluttered into the corner of one of them, as he gazed thoughtfully at a hive of bees that stood near him.

“It's a home-loving though a wandering life,” they heard him murmur; “they range freely abroad in the pure air and sunshine, and collect stores of sweet and pleasant things to enjoy quietly in their wintry days. They're strangely like men, those bees;—the flowery fields and the wide ocean—the warm hive, and the snug cottage—a wandering youth, and a tranquil old age, are each their portion; and then, the honey-juice of blossoms, and the pleasant hoard of sweet fancies

and recollections that the bee and the man both gather in their early rambles, are equally the gift of a bounteous Creator. And how well the little things manage it all! They're as orderly and as handy at their work, and get as little in each other's gangway as a ship's crew mustering 'all hands' at the call of the boatswain's whistle. Ay, ay, sir; this way, captain;" added the old mariner a moment after, as he started up from his seat, on hearing his friend's voice saluting him with a hearty cheer, while the party approached and entered the little garden-gate. "This way, madam; this way, my young lady," continued he, as he bustled about to do the honours of his new house to his visitors.

He shewed them the straight rows of cabbages and potatoes, and carrots, and onions, in the orderly little garden, and gathered a posy of sweet-williams and bachelors'-buttons for Fanny and her Mamma. He shewed them the draw-well, with its bucket quite handy; and told them that the water was as fresh and bright as crystal; as a proof of which he took some up in the hollow of his hand, and let it fall in sparkling drops from his palm, which he once raised to his lips, as if willing to confirm his words by drinking some; though, on second thoughts, he let that handful fall too, sprinkling it over the flowers; remarking, with a sly smile at the captain, "that *they* liked it, poor things, it did them good! And yet I can remember times when I would have given more for that handful of fresh water than for all the wine that ever was crushed, either from grapes or in a jovial cup," added he, with

a thoughtful look that often came over his weather-beaten countenance, giving a strange contradiction to his usual careless sailorlike manner and appearance. He shewed them the bees next, saying, "they were tight lads for work." He took them into the snug cottage with its cozy sitting-room and comfortable bed-room, and said it was as warm a berth as heart could desire; and that it was just like his ship-mate's kind way, to think of getting it rigged for him to turn into in his old age.

While Kit was grasping their father warmly by the hand, and saying this in a hearty tone to their mother, Dick whispered to Fanny, "I wonder whether he'd tell us one of his stories now. I should like to hear some of his adventures."

"I think he must be too tired to-day to talk much, after his journey yesterday," said Fanny; "besides, he's busy and taken up with papa and mamma now, and I don't like to interrupt him."

Soon after their parents took leave; and, as they walked home, their mother told Fanny she had overheard how considerate she had been towards their old friend; but that she and her brother should come and spend an hour or two every afternoon with him, if they pleased. Accordingly, that very afternoon, the moment the cloth was removed, the young Swallows were darting off, when their father cried out, "Hallo! youngsters, whither so fast? I never saw you in such a hurry to run away from a dish of currants and cherries before!"

Dick and Fanny both began in a breath to reply:

but their mother said, smiling, "Never mind; take your dessert on some leaves, and away with you, and I'll explain to your father."

"They are off to renew their acquaintance with old Kit, I suppose," said Captain Swallow, when his children had vanished; "they appeared to be prodigiously taken with him this morning—as indeed he seemed to be with them. Well, they'll amuse him, and help to make the dear old fellow's time pass pleasantly."

"They rather hope he will amuse them, I believe," said their mother; "they have a passion for long stories, and I should think he has plenty to tell them."

"Yes, he has indeed; Kit will spin you a yarn as long as a ship's cable, only once set him a talking," replied the captain. "But do you think all these strange adventures and wonderful histories of his are quite the sort of thing for the children to listen to, my dear? Kit has a knack of relating marvels that I very much suspect never had any existence but in his own brain; for, though he's as true and honest a chap as ever lived, he has a spice of romance in him that, I've a notion, has led him to see all his adventures with a fanciful eye. You know, all we sailors have the reputation of being a superstitious set—our life naturally engenders strange beliefs and extraordinary imaginings. While surrounded for the most part by grand natural objects,—sky and ocean, the sun, the moon, the stars,—yet we are, nevertheless, shut within a narrow limit, and confined in our daily intercourse, for days and weeks together. This circumscribed life has, in Kit's instance, been even

enhanced by many solitary wanderings. Frequently thrown far apart from his own species, an indulgence in silent musing, and a habit of following his own whimsical thoughts, joined to a great taste for imaginative reading, and an originally contemplative disposition, have combined to make him unusually credulous—even for one of us sailors. Don't you think, therefore, his yarns will be apt to set their wits a-wandering and a-wool-gathering, when maybe it would be better that they should be hove-to, steady, and brought alongside more useful things, safe in the harbour of knowledge?"

"Even during Dick's holidays, they both work hard at their lessons in the morning," replied his wife; "and while they work, I try to keep their young heads steady and attentive, and really intent upon storing up as much useful information as possible, that they may secure the all-important advantage of a solid education. But the more careful I am that they shall not think of anything else while they are at study, the more anxious I am that they should have plenty of amusement at other times—and no amusement do they like so well as what they call 'a long story.' While they work, let them work with their whole souls, and when they play, let it be as heartily. The very nature of the narratives they will hear from your old friend, too, will form a judicious contrast to the matter-of-fact practical sort of acquirements I have endeavoured to lead them to cultivate, as being better fitted to their station in life than mere flimsy accomplishments; and as I think the

tendency of the present age (in which they will be called upon to act their part) is perhaps rather too strictly utilitarian in its nature, so this will be best counteracted by the appeals to the imagination and fancy that will be made by Kit's stories, which may form a kind of introduction to the classical fictions they will read by-and-bye. We are too apt, I think, now-a-days, to heap upon bewildered childhood an accumulation of dry facts, scientific scraps, and hard information; which, ill-arranged, ill-digested, and unrelieved by lighter matter, only serve to render young people the prating, superficial, addle-brained little pragmatists which they too frequently are. Let them have sterling knowledge, by all means, but let them have holiday of the mind too."

"I think you are right in the main, my love," said the captain, smiling at his wife's warmth; "for though I've often regretted that my early love of the sea and a sailor's profession led me to neglect the opportunity of learning while young, and so have been compelled to blunder through life more of a dunce than you in your wifely partiality would perhaps be willing to allow, yet I have known some of the happiest moments of my existence from an ardent enjoyment of nature, and a passionate love of the beautiful."

"And if we too strictly exclude the cultivation of the Imagination and Fancy in young people," replied his wife, "I am sure we deprive them of these very sources of happiness you speak of. 'My mind to me a kingdom is!' and surely the region of idea is its most precious dominion. The poetry and ro-

mance of Thought are the best solace for daily toil, and the surest refuge from the inevitable common-places of every-day existence. I feel sure we shall do well in permitting our children to take an interest in all the wild tales and travellers' wonders of old Kit, while we are careful at the same time to instil sound principles, an earnest love of truth, and a veneration for the light of Wisdom."

"Very true," said the captain. "Besides, Kit, though a sailor and a wanderer, is anything but a common man. His natural love of romance and adventure gave a tone of sentiment and imagination to his thoughts, and led him to observe and reflect upon what he saw. He was always noted among us for a lad extremely fond of reading, whenever he could find time, and get hold of a book; and this, joined to his naturally ardent fancy, his good simple heart, and his strict sense of honour and moral worth, gave him a cultivated and refined tone of mind very different from what his station in life might lead one to expect. Therefore, on the whole, I do not know but what his society is the very thing we could desire for our children; for, at the same time that he amuses their fancy, and excites their love of the marvellous, he will lead them to reflect, and draw a moral from most of his narratives, wild and even mystical as they may be."

Meantime, the young Swallows reached the cottage of their new-old friend. They found him comfortably seated in a wooden arm-chair near the hearth (though, the season being early, there was no

fire in the grate), with his legs stretched out at full length and crossed easily over one another, his arms folded, and his eyes glancing occasionally towards the model of a ship that stood on a table in the corner of the room, though they were more frequently employed in gazing through the little cottage-casement at the soft glories of the setting sun, in which he seemed to read and revolve innumerable memories of the past. Between his lips rested a short pipe, from which he drew lazy puffs at long intervals, as if rather from habit than actual enjoyment; though now and then it became firmly clenched between his teeth, as he murmured a lengthened "Ah! —'m!" and shook his head slowly, and closed his eyes dreamily;—though when they were open, they were keen, grey, piercing eyes, and looked at the sunlight with as steady and unwinking a gaze as an eagle's. But they wore a kind and even tender expression as they suddenly fell upon the figures of our two young friends as they appeared at the open door, which was thrown back to admit the sweet breath of the evening air, rich with the odour of the flowers in the cottage garden.

"I hope we don't disturb you," said Fanny, as she stole softly to the old man's side; "but we know you have some wonderful stories to tell, and we want you to tell them to us, if you please; and you have a good thinking face on now, and we hope you'll begin directly, if you could be so good as to remember one—could you? Would you, do you think, Mr. Bam?" She said this with a childlike mixture of

eagerness and timidity, while she put her arms round his large blue sleeve, and hugged it close and winningly. The old mariner's face looked so pleasantly towards her, as she urged her entreaty, that she could not help letting her hand glide round his huge blue collar, and rest for an instant on the bald spot at the top of his head, and then drawing it caressingly down his silver hairs, and smoothing his withered cheek, marked with a thousand minute red lines, while her own round rosy one crept nearer to it, she whispered a repeated:—"Could you be so very kind, do you think, Mr. Bam?"

"To be sure I will, my lass—my dear young lady! Disturb me? that you don't, my dears! Remember? Of course I can—want of memory's not my failing. But I say, my dear lass," continued the old mariner affectionately, "when you look in my eyes in that way, with a smile so like your father's (God bless him!) just call me Kit, plain Kit, as he always does; and not Mr. Bam, which sounds formal, and is moreover a name I somehow never particularly liked. What's your name, my man?" added he turning to her brother.

"Richard—Dick," answered he.

"Ay, Dick! that's right! your brave father's name. Come and sit here in the corner, Dick, my fine fellow; and you, my lass,—what's your name? Oh, Fanny; come and perch close to me on the other side."

"But the story, Mr.—I mean, my darling old Kit; won't you begin and tell us your story?"

He smiled at her eagerness:—"I should begin, I believe, by telling you, that though I was born in a quiet little inland village, never boy had greater hankering after a wandering life, or a more ardent desire to go to sea. My longing to behold other scenes, and take part in those active exertions that engaged my fellow-creatures in the world beyond, filled me with intolerable craving, and rendered the monotony of our simple village existence insupportably wearisome to me. Often did my father check me for the repining spirit which this restless desire for change engendered in me, and would exclaim in the pity of a wiser experience: 'Poor lad! thou little know'st what thou wishest for!' My mother had a brother living at a small sea-port town about forty miles' distance, on the nearest coast to the part of the country where our village was situated; and to this uncle's house I was once sent by my father, not without a hope, I believe, that the rough usage which he knew I should meet with there would have the desired effect of sickening me of a town life, and the wear and tear of the world, and so lead me to love and return to my own quiet home. For this uncle was a hard, money-loving man, and his wife was a hard, money-loving woman, and, moreover, a shrew, with a loud, shrill voice, fierce eyes, thin lips, and bony arms, who thought the chief virtue of the mistress of a house was to scold her servants for faults they might possibly commit some time or other, and to give them continual orders about work they were at the moment doing.

“ My uncle had persuaded my father to send me to him, that he might ‘ push my fortune, and give me a lift in the world, instead of letting me rot in an out-of-the-way village all my life,’ as he expressed it ; so he proceeded to shew his ideas of promotion and worldly advancement, by installing me, immediately on my arrival, in the honourable post of errand-boy, in which office were included the slight duties of cleaning knives, brushing boots and shoes, washing dishes, chopping wood, drawing water, lighting fires, scrubbing floors, cleaning windows, taking down and putting up the shop shutters, opening the door (which, as my thrifty aunt-mistress let lodgings, was a charge that kept me trotting up and down the kitchen stairs like a canary-bird incessantly hopping from perch to perch), carrying trays that were too heavy for the bit of a girl who passed for the maid of all-work to the establishment, running with letters, parcels, and messages for the lodgers, besides occasionally helping my uncle in his business, which was that of a shoemaker.

“ Of all these various duties there were none I performed so willingly as those which in any way helped to save my poor little fellow-servant, ‘ the bit of a girl ’ I spoke of. She was a thin, hollow-eyed, pale-faced creature, bleached and smoke-dried with perpetual dwelling in a town air ; and yet I thought her pretty, from a meek, patient look she had. She would fix her soft blue eyes with a sort of helpless fascination on the flashing fierce ones of her mistress, while she was giving her ‘ a good set-down,’ as she

called it; and with her quivering lips, and submissively imploring eyes, poor Molly would stand there to be rated as 'a good-for-nothing, idle slut,' and 'a bold-faced staring minx,' till my blood boiled with a sense of wrong that all my own hardships failed to excite in the like degree.

"And yet these hardships of my own were bad enough. Coarse, and grudgingly-given food; incessant labour; want of the pure country air, to which I had been accustomed from infancy; brutal, unkind usage; violent, abusive language; little or no rest—for I was up early and down late: all these were but harsh substitutes for the peaceful existence I had hitherto led in my native village; where, if I worked hard, it was in the fresh free air, and with those who loved and fostered me. Still, these, my first rude experiences of life from home, did not lead me to wish for a return to that home. I longed, it is true, to escape from this bondage, this miserable drudgery (so doubly irksome to one of my peculiar disposition),—but it was that I might wander forth to those scenes which my fancy still portrayed to me as full of joy, animation, and beauty. My only consolation during those ten dreary months that I spent at my uncle's were the few stolen opportunities I found of devouring a book now and then, or of creeping down to the sea-shore and indulging my visions about those far distant lands, that lay stretched away beyond the ocean, and which my imagination painted in the most vivid and alluring colours. Innumerable castles in the air did my boyish fancy build, of

taking my poor little gentle Molly away from her thralldom, and of setting sail together for some delightful island, where we might live happy and free the livelong day, with no one to thwart or control us. In those charming day-dreams I pictured her to myself the queen of our beautiful solitude, wandering hand in hand with me through shady groves, and flowering thickets, and majestic woods, where the birds should be our sole companions; and there, I thought, her blue eyes would lose those dark rings that encircled them—there her cheeks would become dimpled and rosy, and her lips would smile instead of tremble. Poor, meek, gentle Molly!”

Here Kit sighed and paused for a moment, then he resumed:—“One morning poor Molly told me, with tears in her eyes, that her mistress had bid her clean the windows, and that she was afraid. ‘But I will do them,’ said I, ‘that’s always my job.’ But she reminded me that I was going on an errand to a place at some little distance from the town that day for my uncle, and, therefore, her mistress insisted that as I could not do them, Molly should; as nothing would induce her to put off the regular day for cleaning the windows. I comforted her as well as I could, assuring her that I would make the utmost haste, so that I might be back in time, to prevent her doing what she so much dreaded. But everything that unhappy day was fated to turn out in misery. I was detained late by my uncle before I set out—I was detained at the house to which I was sent—I was detained on my road back by an accident which nearly ended in a

child being run over. I had scarcely helped to rescue the infant from its dangerous vicinity to the wheels of the cart, and seen it safely placed in its mother's arms, when I resumed the quick pace which I hoped would still enable me to return in time. I reached the entrance to the town; I turned into the street where my uncle lived; but I had scarcely done so, when I perceived a large crowd assembled before his house, who surrounded something that lay upon the pavement. I will not pain your tender hearts, my dears, by dwelling upon the horror of that moment; suffice it to say, that on making my way through the crowd, I found my poor Molly stretched upon the ground, bleeding and lifeless! Her cruel mistress had insisted upon her getting outside the upper window to clean it; the poor girl had missed her footing; she fell, and was killed upon the spot. As I approached they were lifting her from the earth tenderly, and conveying her into the house. Her cap had fallen off, and her comb dropped from her long hair upon the pavement. I picked it up mechanically, and followed those who were bearing the body like one in a fearful dream. I scarcely heard my uncle's voice, though he was storming loudly as I entered the shop. I found, a few minutes afterwards, that he was raving at me for my having loitered so long on my errand; but I stared at him, with dry eyes and a parched mouth, for some time without making out the sense of what he was talking about. At length he drew a letter from his pocket, saying:—
'But here's what releases me from all farther care

of you, you lazy lout, you ; your father's dying, and you are to go home to your mother ; she sent me this letter to say so this morning ; so pack up your alls, and begone ! Off with you at once, and good riddance of bad rubbish ! Nothing but plagues and troubles in this world, I do think !' As he finished speaking, he took up his work again ; and I, merely repeating (in a tone which I could not think of afterwards without shuddering), 'your father's dying, and you are to go home to your mother,' turned round, and went out of the shop. I remember shivering, and feeling a sharp pain shoot through my limbs, as I passed close to the spot where my poor Molly had lain dead so lately. I remember looking vacantly at her comb, which remained unconsciously clutched in my fingers ; and I remember something of walking through the streets, and taking the road which led across the country towards my village home, and which happened to be the same I had traversed in the morning on my luckless errand ; but I recollect nothing else till I found myself leaning heavily and faintly against the parapet of a little bridge that crossed the road near where the accident had happened to the child that morning. How long I remained thus I do not know, but the first thing I was conscious of, was a pair of little chubby bare arms clinging round my neck, and a voice saying : 'Ay, kiss him, and hug him, and love him, Billy, for he saved your life this morning, that he did !' I looked up, and found it was the poor woman with her child, who was so nearly run over, and whom she was

holding close to me that he might thank me in his baby way. I verily believe the poor little infant returned me life for life at that moment, and was an instrument in the hands of Providence for bringing relief to my overburthened heart, for I burst into tears, and thus found vent for the grief and sorrow that had struck me such cruel blows in the death of my poor Molly, and my father's danger, and had made me unable to shed one tear until that time.

“Seeing me ill and sorrowful, the kind woman took me into her cottage, which was close by, where she gave me some food, and made me lie down upon her bed for a couple of hours, telling me that even if I could not sleep, it would be better to take some rest, as I should set out on my journey all the stronger for it. But heaven sent the blessing of sleep to support the poor boy in his early trouble, and I did not awake till the afternoon, when my kind friend told me she had thought of a good plan for me, which was no other than to get a lift in the waggon that would pass by, before evening, on its way to the part of the country where our village was situated. She knew the waggoner, she said, and she would speak to him for me, and tell him how well I deserved help. Well, my dears, I reached home, but it was too late! My father had died of the fever that he had taken suddenly, and I found that my poor mother was rapidly sinking under the same disease; which, joined to the fatigue and anxiety of nursing him, carried her off in three days after my return, so

that in the course of one week I followed both parents to their graves. Nothing consoled me so well under the grief I suffered for their loss, as the recollection that I had never yielded to my ardent desire to become a sailor while they lived; but now that they were gone, and I had no tie to bind me to home, my old longing for the sea returned with greater force than ever. To my desire for wandering, was now added a disgust towards the land that amounted to loathing. I thought that those who spoke of the perils and dangers of the ocean, strangely overlooked the equal risks that existed on the shore. Had I not lost my dear and only friends by violent and painful deaths though they had never stirred abroad? As my thoughts dwelt in horror upon the mangled form of my poor Molly, and the fevered sufferings of my dear parents, I asked myself whether winds, and waves, and stormy shipwrecks, could have worse terrors. Again, the vision of the sea, the vast, the boundless ocean, arose to my imagination, as the only free and unlimited range for man's spirit, and I yielded to my insatiable craving, by setting forth the very next day on my voyage of life.

“I have already kept you so long, my dears, talking of my early sorrows, that I shall not stay to tell you all the particulars of my difficulties in getting a berth on board a ship; suffice it to say, that I did at last contrive to obtain one, and was likewise so fortunate as to find my captain and shipmates as kind a master and as pleasant companions as ever fell to the lot of a poor cabin-boy on first going to sea. It will

frequently happen in the course of my after adventures, that I shall have to allude to the early friends I made among the crew, in that first cruise of mine, but I shall not stop to describe them now, as it is getting nearly time for you to return home, and I want to tell you a bit of a yarn before you go, that you mayn't think all my adventures are as melancholy as those of my childhood were.

“In one of my wanderings—it was some time after my first voyage—I was sent ashore, with another sailor and a young boy, by the captain, to get a supply of fresh water. The latitudes we were in then, being very hot, and the atmosphere very stifling, we had been for some days greatly distressed on board ship for the want of this important provision, so that it became absolutely necessary to seek water, notwithstanding there was some risk in so doing. Many of the men had demurred when the captain had first talked of landing—others had evaded the task—and all had muttered hints of dread and dislike of this place, though it was fair and inviting to all appearance,—saying it was as well to perish of thirst at sea, as to tempt a still more horrible fate on this shore, from which no one was ever known to return. My natural love of adventure, and my usual habit of obedience, however, made me at once accept the task, when the captain selected me for the purpose; and one of the least cowardly of the other sailors and the boy having been appointed to accompany me, we accordingly lowered the boat and rowed to land, which in itself certainly presented anything but a hostile aspect.

Trees, of the most beautiful shape and foliage, stretched forth their palmy branches with assurance of a cooling and luxurious shade; the sands, over which the waves rippled in gentle undulation, were of the most dazzling whiteness, and were strewed with innumerable shells of the most vivid colour and varied form; birds, of bright and glowing plumage, glanced from tree to tree, uttering melodious cooings, intermingled with gay outbursts of joyous thrilling song; and the grass, which lay like a soft green carpet beneath the trees beyond the sands, was sown with a thousand many-coloured flowers; while a sparkling stream of clear water flowed like a silver thread through the brilliant landscape, affording the most delicious promise of the needed refreshment. My two companions, on beholding this rivulet, forgot their fears, and pushing the boat gently aground, sprang ashore, and ran to enjoy the desired draught, heedless of my earnest entreaties that they would stay to help me take the casks out of the boat. Knowing the anxiety of the captain to secure the desired supply, and the extreme state of suffering to which the crew were reduced from its want, as well as having the habit of always punctually observing the old rule of 'duty first and pleasure afterwards,' I remained steadily at my post; lifting out the casks and vessels we had brought with us, as well as I could by myself, though not without some impatience at my companions' desertion. I have never in my life, my dears, had reason to repent my adherence to the rule I spoke of just now, which should form a chief one in the con-

duct of everybody, particularly in that of a sailor ; but in the instance I am now relating, it was of singular service to me. Just as I had succeeded in rolling one of the casks ashore, I raised my head towards my companions, with the intention of calling to them again to come and help me, when I was struck with terror and indescribable dismay at what I beheld. The sailor had gained considerably on the steps of the young boy, and had preceded him by some minutes in arriving at the brink of the beautiful streamlet. Here he had thrown himself down in all the rash eagerness of ardent thirst, and had swallowed several long draughts of the tempting liquid, when, on rising from the ground with a gesture of luxurious satisfaction, and while I almost seemed to hear the sigh with which he yielded himself to the exquisite enjoyment of allayed thirst, I saw him no longer,—he had vanished entirely from my wondering eyes! I placed my hands involuntarily before them for an instant, and then again strained them in the endeavour to make out this marvellous disappearance. In vain! the man had totally vanished from the scene. The spot where he had stood an instant before, and where he had intercepted my view of the fatal rivulet, was utterly vacant ; and there was no one to be seen but the advancing boy, who, struck like myself by the miraculous disappearance of his comrade, had halted for a moment in consternation, but was now hastening forward again. I shouted to him to return—I implored—I threatened ; but to no purpose. Goaded alike by his amazement, his curiosity, and his raging

thirst, he speeded on to the fatal brink, as if fascinated to his destruction; and, to my unspeakable horror, I beheld him share the same fate as his companion!

“Whether they faded into the air, whether they merged into the shining water beside them, or whether they sunk into the earth beneath their feet, I was equally unable to determine, and all my efforts to discover the actual cause of their unhappy doom were unavailing. I could not, however, fail to connect their fate with the mysterious rivulet, and, though parched with thirst, and ready to sink with exhaustion,—the result of my terror and exposure to the noon-day sun,—I firmly resolved I would not yield to the sort of fascination which I was sensible was fast creeping over me, and urging me to go and drink also; but, turning my eyes resolutely away from the tempting shore and alluring stream, I looked in the direction of the ship, determining to row back to her immediately, while I had strength and courage left. These, however, had very nearly forsaken me altogether when I discovered that the ship was rapidly receding from my view, and that she was, in fact, making all sail away from this dangerous and dreaded place. Giving myself up for lost, I uttered a cry of agony and sunk on the sands in despair; when, reflecting on the weakness and folly of such self-abandonment, I summoned sufficient energy to crawl beneath the shade of one of the spreading palm-trees, where, stretched on the velvet turf, I could yield with greater safety to the overwhelming

drowsiness and stupor which was stealing over my senses. My sleep, however, was fevered and restless. Visions of delicious cool draughts tantalizingly held to my parched lips, and snatched away at the moment of enjoyment, tortured and disturbed my repose. I beheld translucent waves within an inch of bathing my feet; I saw showers of silver spray burst in a thousand sparkling drops just a hand's-breadth from my aching brow; I vainly struggled to plunge my burning hands into a crystal vase that seemed placed but a pace or two from the tree beneath which I lay; but, as I eagerly pressed forward to seize it, it eluded my grasp, and, assuming the form of the departing ship, seemed to vanish in a double mockery, which so stung and maddened me that I started and awoke with a deep groan. On unclosing my eyes, the first object they encountered was a human face hanging over me with an expression of interest and wonder; and, springing up to be on my guard, I found it belonged to a short queer little being about three feet high, who began making a series of sharp quick bows, strutting hither and thither, laying his hand on his breast, winking his eyes, and chattering very fast, though unintelligibly; but this, joined to his gestures, which were anything but uncourteous, inspired me with a feeling of the ludicrous rather than of the terrible, so that I soon concluded that I had nothing to fear, especially as the creature's size rendered him no very formidable antagonist, even should he prove himself to be one instead of a friend.

“Trusting, therefore, to these conclusions, I made

signs to him that I was perishing with thirst, and that I entreated him to help me to some means of allaying the fever that consumed me; when he stepped forward, and, nodding consequentially, twice or thrice, he took me by the hand,—which he contrived to do with a very patronizing air, notwithstanding the difference in our height,—and led me from the spot. But what was my consternation, when I found that he was leading me towards the fatal streamlet; and how quickly did all my first misgivings of him revive, when I found that this abominable little dwarf actually made signs to me that I should drink. I started back in abhorrence, and was just about to give way to my desire to punish him for his treachery, by pitching him into the water head foremost, when I reflected that, as he was the only creature I had met with in this apparently uninhabited region, I absolutely depended on him for assistance and relief, and that I had better not destroy him till I had tried whether I could not make him of use to me.

“I accordingly made signs to him that he should drink first, which, however, he immediately declined by stepping back, laying his hand on his breast as before, with innumerable jerking bows, sharp twinklings of his eyes, and a profusion of grimace and chattering. He then pointed to a tree at a little distance, on which grew several clusters of a ruddy juicy-looking fruit, and, perceiving that I hesitated, he ran towards it, and, making a sudden and agile spring, he succeeded in plucking down a branch, and

gathered three or four of the finest-looking, which he immediately proceeded to eat, nodding and smiling and winking at me all the while with a sly sagacious leer of triumph and encouragement.

“The sight of this delicious fruit, which streamed with juice as the dwarf opened and sucked it, was irresistibly tempting to me; and, satisfied with the precaution I had taken, I recklessly seized some, and buried my dry, parched lips in the rosy refreshment. No bad effects, however, followed my rash act; on the contrary, the cool, pulpy repast quite invigorated me, and I felt not only my strength repaired and my spirits revived, but my confidence in my diminutive acquaintance was partially restored, by the pleasant meal he had been the means of procuring for me.

“I accordingly advanced towards him, and shook him heartily by the hand, as the best means of expressing to him my good faith; this salutation he received with his usual struts, shrugs, and grimaces, and ended by standing on tiptoe and endeavouring to hit me a smart slap on the back, which friendly effort falling short, only produced a feeble tap on the edge of my blue jacket.

“However, he seemed to feel that amity was now re-established between us, and so, taking me by the hand again, which he did by placing his little fingers round mine, in the same style of protection and sustaining care with which a nursery-maid would lead along her young charge, he conducted me under the trees, along the smooth grass, and then across a field or two, where, to my surprise, I saw wheat growing

with all the signs of cultivation and human care. Beyond these fields, I beheld a hut rudely built, but surrounded by a garden and an orchard, and bearing marks of order and habitation. But what made me look at this hut with peculiar attention, was its remarkable size, and the large proportions of its doors, windows, and general dimensions. I had no sooner remarked this, and had concluded from that very circumstance that it could not be the residence of my diminutive guide, than I perceived that he was conducting me straight towards the garden-gate, through which we immediately passed, and soon after found ourselves standing before the tall door of the hut. The dwarf, still clutching my hand, stepped up upon the door-sill, stood on tiptoe, strained his little person to the utmost, and succeeded in lifting the huge knocker with the tips of his finger-nails, letting it drop again with a ponderous single knock, which somehow fell upon my heart like a note of evil warning.

“I had hardly time to reflect upon this, and to entertain thoughts of extricating my hand from the dwarf’s grasp, which, though small, was as tight as a vice, when the door was opened by a figure that made my heart quail with dread.

“It was that of a monster some eight or nine feet high, who glared at us with red flaming eyes, set round with flaxen lashes, and brows that gave a strange, weak, silly look to his great features; and his wide nose and big mouth gaped horribly as he smiled a ghastly welcome, and displayed enormous gums, as red, and almost as thick, as beet-roots.

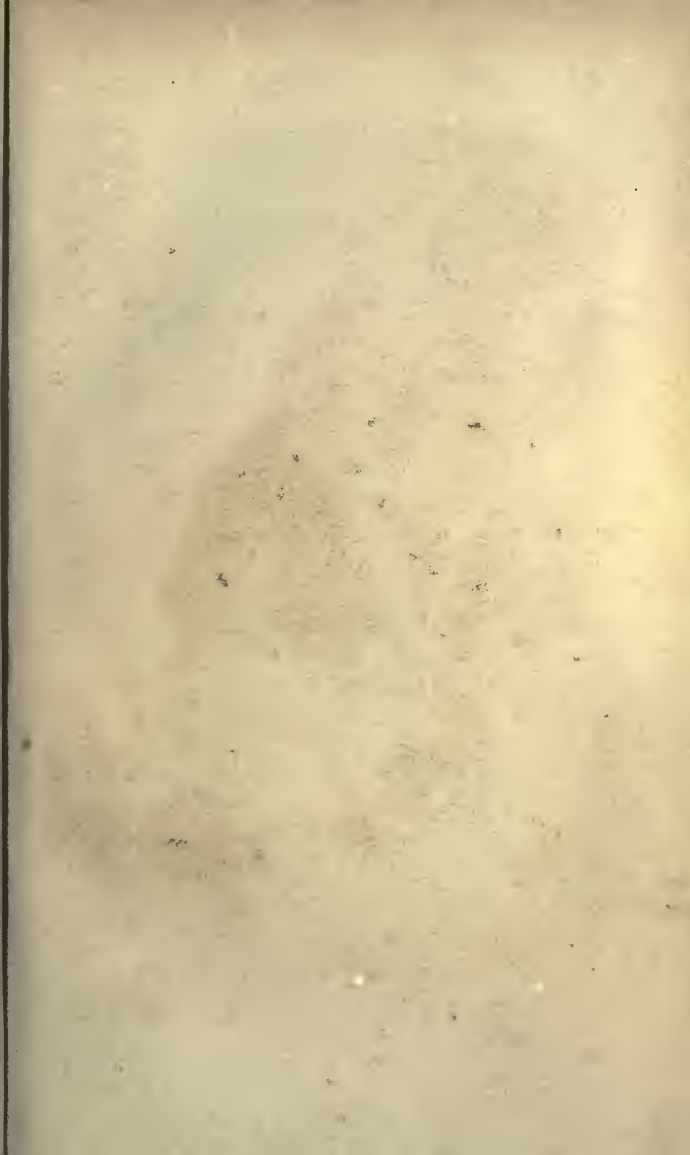
“I shuddered, and closed my eyes involuntarily; but when I opened them again, and would have retreated, I found the door made fast behind me, and that I was in the hut with the malicious dwarf and the terrible giant.

“The two were soon engaged in a vehement conversation, of which I immediately guessed I was the object, from the frequent glances that they each directed towards me; but it was not long before I found I had more to dread from the polite attentions of the detestable little dwarf, with his eternal bowings and scrapings, than from the mighty arm of the giant, who had filled me with such terror by his frightful eyes and vast grinning gums. At one period of their conference, when the dwarf became exceeding wroth, and was making as if he would rush towards me, the giant suddenly and effectually stopped him by putting his forefinger on the top of his head; and at last, finding, I suppose, that it was hopeless arguing the point any longer with his obstinate little comrade, he ended the dispute by opening a door and poking me into a side room, where, upon recovering my breath from the force of the giant’s push (which, though doubtless intended for a gentle one, was sufficiently powerful to fling me down upon my hands and knees into a corner), I found myself a close prisoner, without a hope of escape. The door was fast locked, and the window, being accommodated to the giant’s height, was far above my head; and, moreover, there was no chair or table by which I could hope to climb up to it, and endeavour to make my way out. In-

deed, there was no furniture of any kind in the apartment, which seemed to be used as a sort of store-room to the farm—if farm the hut could be called,—for on all sides were ranged high shelves, on which lay provisions of many kinds, such as loaves, butter, cheese, eggs, and several sorts of fruits, among which I perceived some of those delicious, juicy, rosy-cheeks that I had enjoyed so much soon after my first meeting with the hated dwarf.

“The peril of my situation, and the dread of incensing still further those creatures in whose power I now so completely was, could not prevent my feeling the pangs of hunger and thirst to so violent a degree that the sight of these stores high above my reach filled me with insupportable longings, and made even my desire of escape yield to the immediate wish to obtain some of this tempting food.

“Inspired by this ardent craving, I seized off my hat and flung it up at one of the shelves, in the hope of sweeping down some of the good things with it; but alas! it only brought down one of the rosy-cheeks, and an egg, which latter, of course, was smashed to bits by the fall; and what was worse, my hat had pitched right on to the shelf, and remained there. However, I made the best of my misfortune, by devouring the fruit and draining every drop of the juice it contained; but I had hardly knelt down upon the floor, carefully endeavouring to sip a little of the yoke from the broken egg, before I heard the key turn softly in the door, and in an instant after beheld the broad round face of the grinning giant,





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peering in at me. I was about to start up with a cry of alarm and entreaty, when I perceived that the big monster was making signs to me to be quiet; and at the same time pointing over his shoulder stealthily with the huge thumb of his other hand.

“I remained perfectly still; upon which he advanced into the room; and, coming towards me, he perceived the remains of the shattered egg, and then glancing up, he discovered on the shelf my unfortunate hat, which plainly betrayed the source of the accident. To my great surprise, however, and no less relief, he took up the offending missile with a smile of pity, as if he understood and commiserated the hunger which had driven me to this expedient for obtaining food; and then, placing it with would-be gentleness on my head,—though the weight of his descending hand, as he playfully patted it on, nearly stunned me,—he proceeded to break open two loaves, and placing a pat of butter and a lump of cheese within them, between the crumb, he thrust them hastily into my hands, and strode back to the door, beckoning me to follow him silently. This I did, of course, and entering the same room I had been in before, on first coming to the hut, I saw the remains of a repast spread on the table, at one end of which sat the dwarf, reclining in an arm-chair, with a half-emptied goblet of wine before him, his tooth-pick in his hand, his mouth open, his head thrown back, and his eyes closed in a profound slumber. The friendly giant led me past this sleeping enemy; and I had hardly time to wonder within myself at all this deferential

observance on the part of this strong creature towards one whom one blow of his huge fist would have annihilated in an instant, when I found that we had proceeded through the door of the hut, and were making our way across the garden towards the orchard. I felt almost as much perplexity as gratitude at the conduct of the giant, for I could not account for his generosity towards me, and even doubted now that he was really aiding me to escape, so forbidding was his aspect, and so at variance was his terrible appearance with his kind demeanour. But I soon had a convincing proof of the real goodness of his intentions towards me; for, seeing a brook running beneath the hedge which formed the boundary between the garden and the orchard, I was stooping down to assuage the thirst which still tormented me, when the giant suddenly snatched me by the shoulder, and forcibly upheld me and prevented my drinking, while his vehement gestures and eager expression of countenance warned me to forbear. In an instant the truth flashed upon me;—it was the fatal stream! The same rivulet whose pernicious waters had doomed my comrades to destruction before my eyes that very morning. I drew back in dismay; and, struck with the conviction of my friendly giant's genuine benevolence, I seized his immense hand between both mine and pressed it fervently to my lips. He seemed pleased with this token of my gratitude; then, leading me back a few paces towards a well that stood in the garden, he drew for me a bucket of the delicious element, and watched me with grim benignity, while

I revelled in its limpid coolness, and not only drank deep consoling draughts, but laved my face and hands in the long-desired water. Soon, however, he resumed his careful solicitude for my safety, and glancing uneasily towards the hut, as if he feared the awakening and approach of the dwarf, he gave me to understand I must now hasten away immediately. I once more hugged his enormous hand to my breast, and prepared to depart; while he, hastily snatching up a small keg that lay among some other vessels by the well-side, filled it with fresh water, and slinging it on my back, he hurried me across the orchard and through a little gate, which he closed upon me as soon as I had emerged into the open fields. His evident awe of the dwarf had impressed me with a like fear of him, and had impelled me to fly with the utmost speed from his hated neighbourhood, as soon as I was thus free to do so; but when I had reached the sea-shore, and to my great joy found my boat still floating in the kind of small bay where I had left it in the morning, I sprung into it, and as I rowed away from this fated shore, indulged in regret at having so abruptly parted from the friendly giant, though I could not but rejoice at my safe delivery from the malicious dwarf. At the same time I could not avoid pondering on the strange events that had happened to me on this lone island—if island it were; and when reviewing the wonderful disappearance of my comrades, the remarkable behaviour of the dwarf and the giant so singularly in contrast with their several aspects, and the extraordinary way

in which I had been misled and deceived throughout by appearances, I could never recur in imagination to that spot without naming it in fancy the Island of False Appearances. But it is getting late, my dear young people," said Kit, interrupting himself; "and though it is very pleasant chatting away to you of old adventures, yet I must leave off now, lest we should not be allowed to spin yarns together any more."

"Good-bye, then, dear Kit," said Fanny, affectionately; "we shall be sure to come again to-morrow evening for another story;—and you'll tell us one, won't you?"

The old man nodded a smiling assent, and the two young folks returned home at a pace that betokened light and happy hearts.

CHAPTER II.

KIT'S SECOND YARN.—HIS SHIP-MATE, JOHN PAUL.—THE RAINBOW AND THE GOLDEN KEY.—THE ROCKY VALLEY.—THE OCEAN OF IMAGINATION.—THE LONE MOTHER AND CHILD.

“Now then, my dear Kit!” exclaimed Fanny, as she and her brother bounced into the old mariner's cottage on the following evening, “now then, for another yarn! But, in the first place, I want you to tell me all about the very first adventure you ever had. What was the first strange event that ever happened to you? And how old were you?”

“Oh, but first, Fanny, I want Kit to finish his yarn about the Island of Appearances,” said Dick, “and to tell us how he managed after he had got away from the wicked dwarf and the amiable giant.”

“Well, but which of you am I to obey?” said Kit laughing, “I can't do what you both wish at once, can I?”

“Then tell Dick what he wishes,—he's the eldest;” “tell Fanny what she wishes,—she's the youngest;” exclaimed both the young Swallows in a breath.

“You are both good,” said the old man, smiling, “to be so willing to give up to each other; but perhaps ‘eldest’ or ‘youngest’ are bad reasons. If a

lad's given up to because he's the eldest, it's only adding another chance to the usual ones that he is made a selfish domineering man by the over-indulgence of his mother and sisters; and if a girl is given up to because she's the youngest, it's only teaching her to be more exacting and whimsical than younger ones are apt to be. However, I'll give your sister her way this time, Dick, my friend, for a reason that I don't know is much wiser than the one you thought of, but which will do for us two, because we're gallant men, arn't we? We'll give Fanny her wish, because she's a woman, eh? shall we?"

The young folks laughed merrily, and then, Kit, nodding and laughing too, began his second yarn.

"My first strange adventure happened to me as I was returning from my first voyage with that pleasant ship's company that I mentioned to you yesterday. It was a calm afternoon; the weather had been serene and beautiful for many days; we were sailing on a smooth sea, with only just breeze enough to send us merrily on. The captain was in his cabin enjoying his cigar and his glass of grog after mess; the sailors were all grouped lazily about, either chatting to each other in quiet talk, or lolling idly on different parts of the deck half dozing, or perhaps thinking, for there was nothing particular to do, and all hands were at ease. I was hanging listlessly over the side, watching the rippling waves as they danced and sparkled beneath my eyes, while my thoughts were in that state half idle, half employed, which I believe some people call musing. My fancy care-

lessly wandered over some of the early scenes of my infancy, when, quite a child, I had toddled about the floor of our small cottage watching my mother engaged about some household work; insignificant trifles floated indistinctly to and fro before me; I saw the sanded hearth, and the deal tables and chairs snow-white with my mother's housewifely care; I heard the wooden clock tick, and the cat purr, and even the clatter of the tea-cups and saucers as they were ranged on the board for our evening meal. These slight home-fancies were succeeded, or rather crossed and chequered by curious things that had been told me at different times by some of my favorite ship-mates,—Will Wavelance, Geoffry Tabard, John Paul, Edmund Faery, and others, who would spin yarns by the hour together, when any one of them and I kept watch together. Well, I can't tell how it was,—I could not make it out at the time, and I can't even now say exactly how it happened,—but in the midst of this dreamy state, I suddenly found myself plunging and flouncing in the open sea, and buffeting with the waves for dear life. I suppose I must have lost my hold, and slipped over the side while I was wandering and wool-gathering among all that cross-fire of fancies and odd notions,—but however, there I was sure enough; and what was worse, I could not swim fast enough to gain upon the ship, and no one on board seemed to be aware of my having fallen overboard, nor could I make them hear my cries, shout and bawl as I would, and pretty lustily I did that, you may be sure. Fortunately I

was a good swimmer; and, though my heart sank within me when I found that I could neither overtake the ship, nor make the crew hear me, yet still it did not fail me altogether, and I swam on with tolerable courage for some time, knowing that I could not be very far from land, which we had seen at intervals for some days past, as if it were the coast of some large continent. At length I became conscious that my power would soon be exhausted, and I cast about eagerly in my mind how I could best husband it, to enable me to reach land in safety. I remembered hearing, that if you could but hold yourself perfectly still in the water, and allow yourself to lie flat on your back, you might float with ease and safety. I contrived carefully to assume this position, and the weather being calm, and the tide flowing in, they favoured my endeavours, and it was not long before I found myself gently drifting right on to the desired land, which proved to be a shelving, sandy shore, and very convenient for my purpose. I had no sooner effected my safe landing than I threw myself on my knees and returned heartfelt thanks to God for my preservation; and then, having allowed myself half an hour's rest after my toilsome swimming, I proceeded to explore the place where I was, and to find out whether it would not afford some means of satisfying the hunger, of which I began to feel sensible.

“The country was fertile and beautiful, but there were no marks of habitation, and the few birds and animals I met with were so little alarmed by my ap-

pearance, that I felt convinced they had no human beings to dread. Though this relieved me from fear of meeting with savages or other foes, yet it considerably lessened my hope of finding any means of assuaging my growing appetite for food. As I walked on, my attention was attracted by the manœuvres of a bee, that was wrestling in the cup of a beautiful bell-shaped flower, and seemed to be almost unable to extricate himself, either clogged by the weight of wax he had collected, or detained by the sticky nature of the petals of the flower on which he walked, or rather stumbled along buzzingly. I stopped to help him out of his uncomfortable strait, and I soon had the pleasure of seeing him dart away in a hurried manner, as if he thought he had better return home in case of a change of weather. He did not fly far, however, for I saw him settle on a neighbouring tree, where he went straight to a small crevice in one of the lower branches, and crept in with his load. If I could but help myself to a little of that wild bee's store, thought I, in return for the service I have just rendered him! A feast of honey would be no bad thing! I went towards the tree, and, with a little climbing, soon reached the branch; which, as I conjectured, contained the bee's nest, with a considerable store of honey. Indeed, I was soon convinced that all this large collection was not owing to the industry of my little friend alone, for out flew a dozen or more of his hive-mates, as soon as I had helped myself to a handful of their store. Whether my little friend, the bee, had prepossessed

his companions in my favour, by having informed them of the assistance I had just given him, or whether they were naturally hospitable, and willing that I should enjoy a share of their good things, I know not; but certain it is, that they left me perfectly unmolested; and I, rejoiced to be spared an attack of their stings, sat at my ease in the tree, enjoying my feast, which was soon enhanced by my pulling off some of the cones or pods which grew on the boughs near me, and, finding that they contained a sort of floury substance very like wheat;—so that I do not know that I ever eat a better treat of bread and honey in all my life.

“The scene was beautiful—my meal was pleasant, and seasoned by that best of sauces, hunger—my heart was light with the feeling of recent deliverance from peril,—and I gave myself up to the pleasurable feeling of the moment, without suffering myself to be depressed by the thought of any coming evil that might possibly be in store for me. Even the uncertainty of food and lodging for the night, I would not permit to interfere and perplex me then; and I have frequently had reason, my dears, to be thankful to the Almighty for having blessed me with this happy temper of mine—a power of enjoying the passing good, without meeting a coming misfortune half way:

“Presently I had cause to admire that keen foreknowledge of weather which my friend the bee had shewn himself to possess in common with all his tribe; for, as I sat dangling my feet from my comfortable perch on the branch, and enjoying myself as

I told you, I felt a drop of water fall on my nose, and presently another on my eyelid that made me wink, and then another, and, in a few moments, more and more; and at last I perceived that there was rain coming down fast. It did not incommode me much where I sat, so well did the boughs and leaves of the tree screen me from the wet; I therefore remained where I was, and enjoyed the beauty of the landscape under the influence of the passing shower. And very lovely it was! The trees, the grass, the distant hills, faded gradually from the rich golden hue in which they had been previously bathed by the afternoon sun, and were shrouded in a soft grey veil, that only permitted their graceful outlines to be partially revealed. Then fell the slanting rain-shower; and presently the rays of the sun, gaining power, darted their magic light across the scene, and turned all to glistening beauty. A thousand diamonds gemmed each leaf and spray, bright flashed the still-falling rain-drops, and clear and distinct shone the distant hill-tops against the rich back-ground of the purple clouds. Suddenly all became steeped in a gorgeous many-coloured splendour, and I felt that I was in the midst of a stately rainbow. Often when I had beheld this magnificent object at sea, and its far stretching arch spanned the entire heavens, I had thought with tender awe of its symbolic significance of God's mercy to man, and admired it as one of the most elevating as well as beautiful objects in creation; but now, my whole mind was occupied with something I had heard one of my ship-mates say about

the rainbow. It was John Paul—I believe he had some other name — some surname — but I never heard him called anything but John Paul among our crew. Well, once when we stood together at the ship's prow admiring a majestic rainbow that lay across the heavens before us, John Paul told me that he had heard it frequently affirmed in his native land, Germany, that on the spot where the rainbow rises, a golden key is to be found. Now, I thought of this; now that I felt in the very centre of the rainbow itself, as it were, I thought of this tale of the spot where it rises, and of the golden key, and I wondered whether I was not actually on the very place indicated.

“I looked vaguely on the ground, with certainly but a very faint idea of seeing my hope realized, when what was my astonishment to behold lying on the grass at a few paces from me, a golden key! I started forward and seized my prize eagerly, and indeed such was the joy that took possession of me as I gazed on it with wonder and admiration at its richness and beautiful shape, that I could scarcely forbear clasping it to my heart, or pressing it to my lips. It was a strange indescribable rapture that I felt as I examined this new-found treasure again and again. A sort of unaccountable transport glowed in my heart, and made my veins thrill with glad ecstasy. And yet I knew not why I should be so delighted with the discovery of this key! I have said it was rich, and of a beautiful shape. It was so, for it was of gold, and its wards were formed of graceful lines

and curves, that delighted the eye by their variety and harmonious proportion. Still, singular to say, it was extremely simple withal, and I believe that it was this extreme simplicity, joined to its magic beauty, that filled me with such wild and almost absurd admiration. My next feeling was one of wonder to what or to where it belonged. Did it open some mysterious castle? Did it make fast some concealed treasure, of which I was to be the fortunate discoverer? Did it close in some crime from the eye of day? or did it withhold from the light some wondrous knowledge?

“I was recalled from my reverie about the key by perceiving that the shades of evening were gradually stealing over the landscape, and that I must speedily make up my mind as to what I had best do for a berth to sleep in. Not a trace of hut, cabin, or habitation of any kind was there to be seen, and the hills were too distant for me to hope to be able to reach them in time for me to find a cave to sleep in. At length I resolved to climb up again into my friendly tree which had already afforded me such excellent shelter; so after having sought about till I found some berries on a bush near at hand, I made a tolerably hearty supper on these, as I did not wish to tax the hospitality of my friends the bees too heavily, and then I went to bed, with the best cheer I might. I had no sooner fallen asleep, however, than my dreams took the colour of the events which had so lately occupied my waking thoughts. I fancied that I was still in the lonely spot where I

had found the golden key, and that I sat on a grassy mound intently gazing upon it, while I revolved all the questions concerning its shape and purpose which had recently perplexed me.

“As I gazed, methought I was sensible of an increased brilliancy in the rainbow-tinted atmosphere that still suffused every surrounding object, and on raising my head to discover the cause, my eyes encountered those of a being who was gazing on me with an aspect of benign encouragement.

“Its figure was that of a young seraph, and was robed in a garment of shining white. Two curious wings, of vivid and varied hue, sprung from his shoulders; his limbs were of the most graceful mould, and bespoke strength and swiftness, combined with delicacy; while the exquisite features that composed his countenance shone with a radiant expression of goodness, intelligence, and happiness, that were more than mortal. As I looked up to this lustrous stranger with respectful admiration and attention, his lips parted with a serene smile, and he spoke with a voice of silver sweetness.

“‘Happy human being!’ said the vision; ‘you hold in your hand the means of a beatitude seldom attained in perfection by your race. It is within the reach of almost all; and yet how few are the happy ones who resolutely stretch forth their hand to seize the blessings contained in its dominion. Even you, mortal, are ignorant of its value; you know not how to use the means actually within your power—in your very grasp!’

“The figure glanced at the key I held in my hand, and continued:—‘That key, rightly used, conveys to the owner unbounded wealth, exhaustless treasures, in realms apart from the common haunts of men. But beware of seeking these riches sordidly, or with an unhallowed motive; the key will never turn, the lock will never yield. That key, in the hands of one with a pure heart and clear brain, renders him more potent than a monarch, more mighty than an emperor, and possessing more rule over his fellow-men than a conqueror at the head of a vast army. That key, truly applied, lets in the free light of heaven to the deepest and darkest dungeon that ever disgraced the earth, and leads forth the closest prisoner that ever pined for life and liberty. Bright, and with honest mastery, that key discloses exalted and infinite blessings;—rusty, consigned to neglect, or, worse than all, misused, it becomes a blight and a withering curse to its possessor.’

“I shuddered; the voice ceased; I recovered, and looked up; but, alas! the vision had departed, and left me uninstructed as to the way in which I was to set about gaining the requisite knowledge as owner of the key. The pang of disappointment I endured gave me such pain, that I awoke with a start. I found the dawn just breaking, and the chill of the morning air so benumbed my limbs, that I was glad to descend from my tree couch, and try what exercise would do towards restoring warmth and vigour to them. I walked sharply forward then, in the direction of the hills, and soon I found the motion bring

not only elasticity to my frame, but comfort and animation to my spirits, which had been somewhat depressed by the baffling dream; so that by the time the sun rose in all his majesty, I was in a fit state of energetic resolve and buoyant hope, to pay him my morning salutation, and to offer up my devotions to the bountiful Creator of all good, with a grateful and trusting spirit. By the time I reached the hills, my appetite, sharpened by early exercise, warned me that I was quite ready for breakfast, and bade me look keenly in search of something that might supply me with one. From a slight rift in a gentle eminence a little further on, all overhung with flowering shrubs and drooping brambles, and floating garlands of a kind of wild honeysuckle, I saw a little rill trickling forth; and I was just admiring this natural fountain, and congratulating myself on this pleasant substitute for tea or coffee after a long morning's walk, when, peering about in its neighbourhood for a seat where I might rest myself while I enjoyed a cool draught of the refreshing beverage, I suddenly found I had scared a flock of birds, something like our plovers. They rose in a body into the air at my abrupt appearance, though they evidently did not fear me much, as they settled again very shortly, and not far off.

“On approaching the spot whence they had risen, and which was a sort of sheltered grassy nook not far from the fountain, I found to my great joy a number of eggs, scattered about in clusters here and there which made me guess that these creatures used this

pleasant spot as a sort of general nest for their community. You may imagine I did not scruple to help myself to some of their treasure, and a very excellent meal of eggs and spring-water did I make. After breakfast I resumed my journey, and about ten o'clock, as I guessed by the sun, I had surmounted the chain of hills. On descending the other side, I found myself in a rocky valley, wild and desolate beyond description. There was a sort of dull leaden atmosphere, too, that hung over this dreary spot, which rendered its sterile features still more gloomy and repulsive, though they were sufficiently austere in themselves. Steep rocks of one uniform dull grey colour frowned in rude grandeur on every side, and seemed inaccessible to all human footsteps. 'Stern, sullen, arid, and blank, the barren monotony of the scene struck a chill to the heart, and cast an oppressive weight on the spirits. I traversed the valley with listless, aimless steps, and with a jaded supineness of feeling that was more insupportably wearisome than the hardest labour, or the most irksome tasks could have been. I dragged my limbs along, and yet I seemed to have no object in proceeding. How was this inert apathy changed, however, into joyful energy and thrilling expectation when I arrived on the other side of the dreary valley, and beheld in the granite wall of rock which formed its opposite boundary, a key-hole—a distinct, well-defined key-hole,—and one that instantly struck me as being of similar dimensions with my new-found treasure of the previous evening—the wondrous

golden key! I drew it forth from my bosom, where I had carefully secured it, and was about to apply it eagerly to the lock, when the words of the vision flashed upon my memory, and I hesitated with a timid doubt of my own unworthiness and inefficiency for the task before me. The key was to be 'rightly used,' 'truly applied;' did these require any previous consideration or study? It was to be directed by the hands of one who had a 'pure heart and a clear brain;' did I possess either? I hardly knew, young and inexperienced as I was, how to resolve these questions. But I thought, 'I do know that I shall use it without one sordid or unhallowed motive; for I do not particularly covet riches or power, and it is solely with a hope of strange adventure and new incidents that I feel urged to try the power of the golden key. Besides, neglect and rusty disuse are equally to be avoided by its possessor; let me then endeavour to apply it honestly and trustfully.' Stepping lightly forward, then, and breathing a short but fervent prayer to heaven that my enterprise might prosper, with a throbbing but resolute heart I placed the key in the lock. I had no sooner done so, than a strain of solemn music pealed forth as of a rich and deep-toned organ in some cathedral aisle; a soft and gracious perfume pervaded the atmosphere, and the granite rocks parted before me, and disclosed a scene of sublime beauty. I beheld a wide expanse of ocean steeped in the most gorgeous sunshine; the waves heaved and fell in glowing undulations of light; the sky blazed in noon-day splen-

dour, and reflected lustrous brilliancy on the grey rocks that surrounded the valley, gilding even their dullness. I stepped forth to meet this burst of radiance, when the granite gates of the rocky valley closed immediately behind me, and I then perceived that I had inadvertently left the key in the lock on the other side. I felt little temptation, it is true, to return to the dreary monotony of the rocky valley; the rather, as I reflected that the key had already done its office in having introduced me to this new and glowing region, so inviting and so full of promise.

“I gazed with rapture on this grand expanse of ocean, and felt all my early love of the sea revive in full force, with an added sense of beauty that swelled my heart, and filled my eyes. Mingled awe and admiration possessed my soul as I contemplated this ever-heaving bosom of Mother Nature, which conveys her children to behold all those distant wonders that fill the imagination, and dilate the heart with burning desire to wander forth and come face to face with their marvellous reality. I felt even physical effects of this yearning of the spirit; my chest expanded, my breathing was deep yet hurried, my fingers were clutched in impatient convulsion, and my feet curled and writhed with the vehemence of my longing to set forth at once. As I stood thus pantingly, and strained forth my eyes, I distinguished, amid the dazzling undulations of the waves, a small object, which proved to be a boat; it was not moored, but balanced lightly to and fro, as if

beckoning me to put forth upon that glowing ocean. A few plunges enabled me to reach it, as it lay close in shore, and stepping in, I yielded myself up to the delight of finding myself launched upon the alluring waters, taking no thought of rudder, compass, or sails, but feeling a sort of lulling, though blind faith in the power of this slight vessel to convey me prosperously to some desirable haven.

“I had proceeded thus some hours, feeling neither hunger nor thirst, so absorbed was I with the delight of this new world of waters, when towards evening I became sensible that I was approaching land. I folded my arms, and drooping my head a little, I closed my eyes, and yielded to a sort of dreamy repose between sleeping and waking, partly the result of the strong emotions I had felt during the day. As I sat thus, I was roused from my soothing composure by a something that pressed softly and warmly across my feet. I know not why, but I did not unclose my eyes immediately; when I was still more startled by feeling the warm soft object move, then followed a gentle cooing sound, and, on opening my eyes, I beheld, to my infinite astonishment, a little child crawling over my feet, and stretching forth its fat dimpled hand to my knee with a winning murmur of entreaty, as if it besought me to take it up and caress it. In the utmost amazement, I took it in my arms, and set it on my knee, and pressed its soft, blooming cheek to my bosom, while I kissed its fair, curly head, and uttered an incoherent exclamation of tenderness and surprise. The little creature only

fixed its large blue eyes upon mine for a moment, smiled, repeated his cooing murmur, and then replaced his head against my breast with affectionate pleasure, and the loving confidence of childhood.

“It seemed about a year or fifteen months old, and too young to walk; but how could it have come into my boat? Had it dropped from the clouds? Was it wafted through the air? Had it been borne hither floating on the waters? I kissed its bright hair, and folded its chubby limbs in my arms again and again, as if to convince myself of its reality, and actual presence, for I could hardly believe my senses, that a lovely living child was actually in the boat with me.

“It seemed to like its new friend and its snug berth, for it nestled close to me, and sung a little under-song to itself, as of cooing contentment. As we neared land, however, it raised its head and began to struggle slightly in my embrace, as if it wished to free itself from my encircling arms. I withdrew them; the infant slid down through my knees, and before I could distinguish how it was, or by what means he reached as far, I beheld him on the prow of the boat, half crawling, half clinging to the side. I uttered an exclamation of terror almost amounting to a scream; when, as I rose to spring forward and rescue him from his dangerous situation, I beheld the little urchin rise, totteringly, to an upright position, and while he uttered a musical crowing laugh as he nodded to me in baby triumph, he stood perched and balancing for a moment, and

then expanding a pair of curiously folded wings, as he remained hovering for a few seconds more, he suddenly darted away over the sea, and flew swiftly towards the land. The secret was now at once explained—he had *flown* into my boat. Yet a more perfectly human creature than the little fellow seemed, could hardly be. His flesh was mottled, firm, and dimpling, and yielded to the pressure of my fingers with the true elasticity yet smooth surface which distinguishes the limbs of childhood.

“By this time I had arrived close to the shore, and as I prepared to land, I perceived a young woman standing near the water’s edge, holding a child in her arms, which I soon discovered to be no other than my winged visitant. I stepped out of the boat, and approached them, when I observed my little friend stretch forth his hands towards me, and in another moment, he sprung out of his mother’s arms, and flying towards me, fluttered against my breast, till I clasped him fondly to me. The woman uttered a cry of alarm, and springing after the child, exclaimed wildly, ‘Felix! Felix!’

“I was much surprised to hear her speak in English; but, anxious to relieve her alarm as speedily as possible, I said, cheerfully, ‘Never fear, dear madam, your boy is as safe with me as in your own arms; he and I have made acquaintance before.’

“Her surprise at hearing me speak thus, equalled my own; but I went on endeavouring to reassure her, in which task I found some difficulty, for I think I never, in the whole course of my life, met with a per-

son so little within the control of reason when under the influence of her fear or anxiety.

“When she had a little recovered from her terror, which I think was rather from beholding how contentedly her boy nestled still with me, than from any arguments of mine, she proposed our going to her habitation, that I might take some repose and refreshment, as well as relate to her by what strange accident I had found my way thither. This made me recollect the boat in which I had arrived, and I looked towards the sea, in the hope of seeing it still near the shore. In vain, however; without moorings, without fastening of any kind, it had drifted away with the ebbing-tide, and I descried it in the distance lightly dancing to and fro on the waves, as I had first beheld it in the morning; but now each moment receding still further amid the world of waters, until it was entirely lost to view.

“I turned with a half sigh to my guide, as she led me towards her habitation, which proved to be a kind of cavity, naturally formed in the rock—lofty, spacious, and commodious enough; but I soon ceased to feel any regret as I hugged the beautiful child in my arms, and thought of all the endearing ways of this new little friend of mine.

“After I had made a hearty repast of some fruit, milk, and a kind of cake or bread which my hostess set before me, I was preparing to comply with the request she had previously made, that I would tell her how I came to this place; when she interrupted me, by telling me that she would hear my story on the

morrow, when I should be better recovered from my fatigue; and that she would now shew me where I could rest for the night.

“‘The cave is so spacious,’ said she with a feeble smile, ‘that it would afford many spare bedrooms did we need them for numerous visitors; but as it is, you can take your choice of one of them, and I will arrange some skins in it as well as I can for your accommodation, hoping that you will enjoy a comfortable night’s rest.’

“Her manner was quiet, and marked by a sort of apathetic indifference that chilled me, and forbade the warm thanks that sprung to my lips, and with which I was about to reply; indeed, she looked like one so lost to outward objects, and to be so wholly possessed by some absorbing inward sorrow, that all unnecessary words seemed an impertinence, and merely an intrusion on her melancholy. For some time after she had left me to repose, I was unable to sleep, from pondering on her singular manner and evident misery, as well as indulging in many conjectures relative to her winged boy, and the strange histories which doubtless belonged to them both; but by degrees, her pale unhappy face blended its hues with the rosy ones of her little son’s countenance—the mother’s woe-stricken lines became confused with the chubby rounded cheeks of the infant—my thoughts faded into inaction, and I slept profoundly.

“When I awoke the next morning the sun’s rays were making their way through the crevices of the rock, and darting bright reproach into the part of the

cavern where I lay; for I had fully intended being up with the earliest dawn, in order to assist my hostess as much as possible by forwarding some of the household arrangements before she should herself get up. However, to the great relief of my conscience, I found that she was not yet stirring; for, like many people who give way to an overwhelming grief, she had acquired a habit of lying in bed—a very foolish habit, by-the-bye, my dear young friends; for there is an animating principle and a strengthening stimulus in the fresh morning air which early risers alone know how to value properly. Had this poor woman sought the healthful courage imparted by the custom of early rising, she would have perhaps been better able to meet and sustain her melancholy fate. But you will find, as I proceed to tell you all I afterwards learned of my unhappy hostess, that this was not the only point in which she discovered a want of wisdom and knowledge of what was best for her.

“To return to the first morning of my acquaintance with her. On issuing from the portion of the cavern where I had slept, I found to my joy, as I told you, that my hostess was not yet up. I passed through the principal space in the cave where I had supped on the previous evening, which might be called the dining-room; and after arranging matters here to the best of my power (for you must know that a sailor learns to turn his hand to anything, and can make a bed, or sew on a button, with any chambermaid or workwoman of them all), I went out into

a sort of enclosed space near the cave, which was surrounded by a neat paling, and where I observed a cow and two or three goats grazing, evidently ready to be milked; and having provided myself with a wooden vessel that lay near at hand, I prepared to perform this office as well as I could. Considering that I had never learned to milk a cow, for my father had been far too poor to keep one, I managed pretty well on the present occasion; and I had already made good progress in my work, having finished with the cow, and was beginning with one of the goats, when I heard a little merry laugh not far from me, and looking up in the direction whence the sound proceeded, I perceived the winged boy perched on the paling close by. When he saw by my nodding and smiling that I had discovered him, he flew towards me, and settled on my shoulder; and there he stood fluttering and hovering, half on tip-toe, half held up by his quivering spread wings, while he tried to steady himself by clasping his dimpled arms round my head. 'Steady, Felix! steady, boy, steady!' cried I, while he laughed and crowed with delight; and thus his mother found us when she came soon after to summon us to breakfast.

"She seemed reconciled now to the attachment which had evidently sprung up between her son and me, and bore to see him in my arms with a complacency very different from her wild alarm of the previous evening, so we returned to the cave in very sociable style; the child frolicking about us, first fluttering to his mother, and then back to me again

—for he could evidently fly much better than he could walk. But though this poor woman made me welcome in the cave, and in her negligent fashion allowed me to feel that my arrival at this place was nowise disagreeable to her, yet it was long before her melancholy reserve yielded to my efforts at consolation: while my cheerful endeavours to draw her into conversation, and a more comfortable train of thought than the one which habitually engrossed her, were for some time met by a chilling apathy that was inexpressibly discouraging. After the first morning, when she had heard my history of the account I gave of my adventure in reaching this shore, she had expressed no more curiosity, and appeared to take no further interest in my presence. She seemed to have made up her mind that I was a nowise dangerous associate for her child, and beyond this she appeared to have no thought about me, but remained absorbed in moody grief and wrapt in silence. The gaiety and cheerfulness natural to my age, of course rendered me a more acceptable companion to little Felix, than his poor young mother, with her pale face and moping ways, could be to him; and when she wandered away, as was her daily custom, to the sea-shore, where she would sit for hours gazing fixedly across the wide ocean, he would remain by my side and watch me while I worked, or gambol with me when I indulged him after the morning labour was done with a game of play. Happy days were those I spent with this fascinating little being! He was so beautiful, so graceful, so full of joy and innocent mirth, and

yet so gentle, and winningly affectionate! Dear charming Felix! How my heart doted on your bewitching loveliness! And how I longed to make it a means of wiling your poor mother from her useless, her pernicious indulgence in her hopeless grief. At length, with the courage inspired by this thought, I would follow her to the lonely seat among the rocks, where she was accustomed to remain buried in her melancholy musings; and, seeming merely to follow the lead of my young companion, I would induce him to frolic and play his pretty gambols where she might observe them, and become inspired by their cheering influence. For some time this went on, she scarcely appearing to notice us or our romping, till I almost despaired of ever winning her to a smile or a remark; when, one day we were returning to our noontide meal after a morning spent among the rocks, she gazing as usual drearily and silently over the sea, and Felix and I having fairly worn ourselves out with a violent romping-bout, accompanied by roars of laughter; he had now fallen fast asleep in my arms as I bore him home; and she suddenly spoke to me of her own accord.

“‘ You are a kind youth, Kit,’ she said, ‘ and have been most patient and good with me and my sorrows; bearing with my moody silence, forbearing to intrude upon my secrets, and yet gently and affectionately seeking to relieve me from the burthen of their solitary endurance. But it is too late! Had I met with you sooner,—could I have earlier learnt the lesson taught me by your wise cheerfulness, and

imitated the wholesome energy with which you meet your hardships by activity and courage, instead of yielding to despondence; had I not weakened my powers, and exhausted even my spring of hope by supine lamentation and unavailing regret, I might have profited by your friendly help, and have believed that a future was still in store for me. But it is too late!' she repeated with a deep sigh.

"Why too late?" exclaimed I eagerly. "With such a treasure in your possession as this dear child,—with such a motive to make life dear to you,—with darling little Felix to keep a brave heart for,—why despair? why talk of its being too late? Why should it be too late?"

"'I am dying,' said she, sadly, but quietly; 'I am dying, Kit, though your young, hopeful eyes cannot see it. I feel too surely that my unhappy lot, with my want of submission to the Almighty's decree, and my unmindfulness of the blessings he has vouchsafed to me to relieve the misery of my fate, has worn away my existence, and as certainly brought my life to a close, as if I had deliberately drunk poison.'

"I was inexpressibly shocked, and could not utter a word in reply as she paused.

"Presently she resumed, 'I should have no right to pain your young heart by this declaration, had I not a hope of interesting your sympathy, and inducing you to promise aid and protection to my poor Felix, to my poor motherless boy, as I feel convinced he will shortly be. Alas! in all probability, then entirely an orphan.'

“This last word seemed to excite her grief beyond the power of control, for she burst into a flood of tears, bitter, and frightfully vehement; but, after a few minutes, she made a strong and convulsive effort, and mastering her emotion with evident difficulty, she resumed:—‘It is your due, Kit, that you should learn all the particulars of my sad story; you who have been so true a friend to me, and will, I hope, continue your loving-kindness to my boy hereafter; you, who have so considerately respected my grief hitherto, and restrained all expression of curiosity, ought to have nothing withheld from you; therefore, by to-morrow, I will endeavour to gain composure and courage to relate to you my history, and by what accident I arrived here.’

“The next day, accordingly, when we were seated in the usual nook among the rocks, with Felix playing at our feet, busily engaged in pouring out and replacing the shining contents of my purse, with which employment I had purposely provided him, to occupy his attention during his mother’s relation, she began her story as follows:—but,” said Kit, suddenly breaking off, and interrupting himself; “I fear it is getting time for you two to be off home, so I’ll tell you what she told me, when you come here to-morrow evening.”

“Well, dear Kit, we’ll go then,” replied Fanny, leaving the old man’s side reluctantly. “Come along, Dick; though I do long to hear the poor lady’s story, and more about the little Felix, with his curious wings, yet we must do as Kit wishes, or,

perhaps, he'll play the tyrant, and refuse to tell us any more of his wonderful stories."

"But, Fanny, I must ask him one question before we go," said her brother; "I want to know, Kit, whether the golden key really did bring you riches, and wealth, and power, and all the grand things mentioned by the vision? Did you ever find them after opening the gates of the rocky valley, and sailing across that bright sea?"

"My dear lad," answered the old mariner thoughtfully, "I have often asked myself the same question. And in pondering over the matter, I have come to this conclusion; that the key admitted me through those ponderous barriers from the desolate sterile valley, and led me to the shore of that resplendent sea, which I have always since named the Ocean of Imagination,—for it conducted me to the life I had always sighed for from earliest childhood—a life of adventure, of romantic incident, and of ever-shifting scenes of beauty and entrancing strangeness, worth more to me than sumless heaps of treasure, or mines of costliest gems. I have fancied that a hearty enjoyment of life, a power of abstracting my mind from the disagreeables and hardships of travel, while I dwelt with rapture on the ideas it conveyed, and the keen sense of gratification with which I was able to extract enjoyment from all my adventures under circumstances which might have depressed and discouraged a less ardent imagination than mine, was in fact, the sumptuous gift bestowed upon me by the possession of the key, and I do not know but that I

have had reason to receive it with more gratitude than any other treasure whatsoever.”

The old mariner, at the conclusion of this speech, bidding his young friends gravely and affectionately farewell, they sped away home.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF KIT'S YARN OF THE LONE MOTHER AND CHILD.—HER STORY.—KALLISAH.—FELIX.—NEW ASSOCIATES.

THE next evening when the two young Swallows were comfortably ensconced in the old mariner's cottage, Dick snugly crouching on one side of him, and Fanny hugging his other arm as usual, Kit thus resumed his yarn, where the lone mother was beginning to tell him her story.

"My first misfortunes began," she said, "with the loss of my poor mother, who was sickly and weak-spirited, and unable to contend with the grief of discovering that her husband was an habitual drunkard. He had contrived to deceive her with regard to this defect in his character until after their marriage, but when once he had gained his point in inducing her to become his wife, he had relapsed into his usual excesses, and brought her to an early grave with shame and regret before I had reached the age of six years. My second calamity was my father's marrying again, and giving me for a stepmother a hard cruel woman, who ill-used me, and made me little better than a servant to her own children, who were born in rapid succession after her union with

my father. On this little family I had to wait from morning till night, endure all their caprices, and abide by their ill-temper, their mother's exactions, and my father's injustice. I sunk into a mere abject drudge, and was so broken spirited, that when, at the age of eighteen, I found that I had engaged the attention and sympathy of a young midshipman who came to lodge at the house next door to that in which we lived, and that he often took occasion to talk to me and manifest an interest in my fate, I could only at first conclude that he was jeering at me, and mocking my suffering, by a pretended kindness and solicitude. Soon, however, he contrived to convince me that his sympathy was sincere, and that it had produced an ardent attachment for me, which no time could weaken or destroy.

“For one who had been from childhood the unceasing object of unkindness, neglect, and cruelty, to inspire such an affection was as the opening of new life—the disclosing of an earthly heaven. I yielded myself impetuously to this unexpected prospect of happiness; and finding my young lover impatient to make me his before his next voyage should take him away for an indefinite period, and, possibly, separate us for ever, I gave him my hand with a joy equal to his own at receiving it, and became the wife of Felix Morton. Mere boy and girl as we both were,—for my husband was scarcely twenty,—we stayed not to calculate the importance of the step we had taken, or the consequences in which it would involve us; we loved with all the warmth and reck-

less ardour of youth; we married, and were for a time as happy as mortals could desire, notwithstanding the threatening event which marked the very first day of our clandestine union. Too much in awe of my father and tyrannous step-mother to consult them in the affair, or to dream of asking their consent, we were married privately one morning, at a neighbouring church; and, returning to our respective homes, I learned by a singular chance in the course of the afternoon, that my Felix's ship had sailing-orders, and that she was to leave port that very evening. In the utmost agitation I flew through the garden to my lover's lodging to learn the truth, and found a small hurried note, bidding me a distracted adieu, and informing me of his having been compelled to obey his captain's orders, which were to execute some commission at a neighbouring town to our own, which was a sea-port; that he should thus be detained till a late hour in the evening,—indeed until only within a short hour of the one fixed for the ship's weighing anchor; and that he, therefore, conjured me to meet him, if possible, on the quay at that hour, that he might assure me of his constant affection, his unshaken faith, and his firm hope of meeting again at some happier time, when he might claim his beloved bride, and make her all his own. I was absolutely stunned with this dreadful news. The thought of parting with my new-made husband, whom I adored so passionately, was worse than death to me. This being, so frank and handsome, so generous, so brave yet so gentle,—

so animated yet so tender!—this being, who had first taught me the bliss of loving and being loved; who had raised and cherished the poor despised outcast, and inspired her with hope and self-respect; could it be that this being was to be torn from me just as I had learned to cling to him as my only earthly treasure? Buried in grief, I returned to my miserable home, and resumed my usual drudgery, devouring my sobs and tears of anguish, and concealing them as well as I could from observation.

“Towards evening, however, while I was endeavouring to devise some means of stealing down to the quay unperceived, my father called me to him; and, after making some harsh remark upon my red eyes and sulky ways, he bade me go and fetch him some liquor from a public-house, at a tolerable distance from where we lived, but which had a name for selling good spirits. I was preparing to obey him, when my stepmother employed me about something for one of the children, which detained me so long as to exasperate my father, who was subject, like most intemperate men, to fits of violent passion. He took me by the shoulder, and bestowing a hearty curse upon me, turned me out of doors, bidding me begone, like a good-for-nothing lazy slut as I was. My heart was almost broken with this cruelty of my father's, coming in the midst of the grief from which I had been previously suffering, and I fled through the darkening streets with a sort of mad bewilderment. ‘Begone!’ I exclaimed wildly, repeating my father's words; ‘ay, begone!—would I could be gone, indeed; and return

no more to this wretched home, where I have never known anything but injustice and ill-treatment! Oh that I could be gone—gone far away with my own Felix—my own dear husband!’ I paused for an instant, struck with the recollection that this must be about the very hour he had spoken of as being the one when he had hoped to meet me previous to his departure. I hurried on, forgetful of aught but Felix and my anxiety to see him; when just as I was emerging from a dark narrow street which led straight on to the quay, close to that part where I knew his vessel lay, and where the crew were busy finishing her last preparations for sea, he perceived me, and sprung forward to clasp me in his arms, drawing me as he did so within the shadow of the houses in the narrow street. Here he earnestly repeated the passionate protestations of regret, constancy, and hope, which his note had expressed; and learnt in return from me my deep affliction, as well as the recent cause I had to dread and detest my home more than ever.

“‘This shall not, must not be!’ exclaimed he with a vehement burst of emotion; ‘she must not return to be trampled on and destroyed by her hateful relations. Who will protect her when I am away? She will sink and die before I can return to rescue her. She must be saved, and at once!’

“He paused for a few seconds in deep thought; and then, with the energetic decision which marked his character, strode a few paces up the narrow street, drawing me still with him, towards a small shop dimly lighted by a flaring tallow-candle, and in which

they sold slop-clothes and other ship's stores. Entering the shop, and bidding me wait close outside, Felix purchased a suit of coarse dark-blue clothes, of a lad's size, and quickly returning to me, he whispered:— 'There is still time for my project, Nanny, if you will be a brave girl, and do as I would have you; but keep a stout heart, and lose not a moment.'

"I answered as boldly as I could (for his presence somehow always inspired me with greater courage than I could muster at any other time); and he then proceeded hurriedly to explain that he wished me to equip myself in the sailor-boy's suit he had just bought, and that in this disguise he hoped I should escape observation sufficiently for him to smuggle me on board ship, and carry me off with him. The hope of release from my bondage, but, far more, the thought of escape with my beloved husband, excited me to act with promptitude and resolution; and, accordingly, I no sooner comprehended his design, than I retired quickly into a deserted yard or wharf not far from where we stood, and there, behind some broken casks and ship lumber, I effected an expeditious change of clothes, and returned to my lover, who declared that I now looked as trim a little cabin-boy as he would wish to see. It was by this time necessary to hasten back to the quay, and join those going on board. We were just in time; for a rough voice calling out, 'Now then, where are those lads! here, you boys, look alive there,' pushed me onwards with a group of young sailors who were loitering about, and among whom I had immediately mingled on

reaching the spot; and thus, amid the bustle and darkness, I found myself hurried on deck, whence Felix soon contrived to convey me below unnoticed by any one. It was of course not very long that I could remain undiscovered; and the presence of a cabin-boy more than their number was perceived by the crew before many days had elapsed. However, a feigned story of my being a runaway lad whom love of the sea had rendered a truant from the home of his parents, and had induced him thus to steal a berth, found credit with the captain, who was the uncle of my Felix; and probably not unwilling to connive at what he believed to be a scape-grace trick of his nephew's to introduce a favourite comrade or school-fellow on board his ship. The other officers and sailors were always jealous of Felix, and of the fancied favouritism with which his captain treated him on the score of relationship; but it was some time before I discovered this enmity on their part, or indeed awoke to the perception of anything but the single all-engrossing fact of my being with my husband, and the constant object of his love and fond attention. While I was wrapped in this dream of happiness, I was the most enviable—the most blest of mortals; but, alas! the time came when I could no longer remain blind to the murmurs of discontented feeling and vindictive jealousy that prevailed among my Felix's shipmates against him; and my awakening from my dream of bliss was as abrupt and alarming, as my previous repose had been balmy and secure. The first thing which startled me to a sense of his

danger, were the rough taunts of one of the subordinates of the crew, in reply to some order which Felix had given him as midshipman, and his superior officer. The man ended by muttering,—‘ A pretty thing indeed, to be ordered about by a whipper-snapper of a boy, who is himself led in tow by a petticoat—or what ought by rights to be one, or to wear one, it’s all the same thing.’

“ ‘This hint at the discovery of my sex and disguise, made me tremble for my secret, but still more for the safety of my husband, which I felt to be perilled by what might be considered an act of insubordination if represented to the captain malignantly, as the man’s manner shewed it would be, if reported at all.

“ ‘The next day I had fatal confirmation of all my worst fears.

“ ‘While sitting below, each moment expecting Felix, for he took every opportunity of stealing down to see me when his duty would permit, I heard loud voices, and tokens of vehement contention on deck; and, creeping up the companion with knocking knees and a beating heart, I beheld a scene of confusion and altercation of which I only too surely and at once comprehended the meaning. The sailor who had so brutally taunted Felix on the previous day stood forward, loudly charging my husband with having secreted a woman on board, and taxing the captain with undue partiality and favoritism, in having connived at this breach of discipline on the part of his nephew. The man was warmly supported

in his accusations by the majority of the crew, and, as the captain scarcely repelled the charge, but proceeded to rebuke them severely for their own insubordination and mutinous behaviour, in thus daring to dispute his justice and arraign his conduct, the remainder of the men gradually fell from him and left him standing side by side with Felix alone together. I would have sprung forward to the spot where they stood, but I was so hemmed in and impeded by the crowd of men who now all occupied the side of the deck where I was, that I could not force my way through them.

“‘I should tell you that we had by this time been about six weeks or nearly two months at sea, and we were, at the period I speak of, in the offing of a large continent that cannot, I feel sure, be far from where we at present are, and which I have always believed to be just visible from the point of rock on which we are seated.’

“The lone mother paused, and pointed with her trembling hand to a dim speck just perceptible on the horizon, which she believed to be the land she spoke of. Her pale face and quivering lips shewed what a severe restraint she had been putting on her feelings, in order to narrate her sad tale collectedly and intelligibly; but the effort evidently cost her dear, and was made at the expense of strength and even vitality. She resumed, however:—

“‘The mutiny once begun, it increased rapidly, and all the long-concealed wrath and jealous doubts of the captain and his nephew, flamed forth in open

rebellion and avowed threats of vengeance—threats which were cruelly and speedily fulfilled, and carried into fatal execution. Finding all their menaces fail in subduing Captain Morton's inflexible notions of their respective duties, and that they could not make him yield one jot of his command, or promise one point of their manifold exactions, they suddenly agreed to end the dispute at once by placing him and his detested nephew in an open boat, cutting them adrift, and letting them find their way ashore as they best might, whilst they themselves would seize the ship and command her as they chose. On hearing this horrible sentence passed on my beloved husband, I staggered and reeled, as if struck by a heavy blow, and, as I gasped forth a shriek for mercy, Felix heard me, and our eyes met in one mute expression of anguish. It was our farewell look—as brief and intense as our joys had been;—I never beheld my Felix more—I fainted.

“ ‘Would to Heaven I had never recovered from that death-like swoon, which, at least, spared me the sense of my misery,’ resumed the poor young creature after a pause of emotion such as seemed to deprive her of several hours,—nay, days, of life, and bring her nearer to the grave, as it were, before my eyes; ‘but when I returned to consciousness, I heard remarks from the mutinous ruffians around me which evinced plainly their regret that, instead of having been left behind, a mere useless burden on their hands to remind them of their guilt, I had not been turned adrift with my friends. How fervently I echoed

their regret in the depths of my heart, you may easily imagine, Kit; but I gave no token of hearing or seeing aught that passed; and at length, after various proposals for getting rid of so troublesome a witness of their misdeeds, some even going so far as to talk of knocking me on the head and pitching me overboard at once, I heard them determine upon putting me ashore on the first land we touched at. In the course of a few hours we neared this place. I felt them lift me up from the spot where I lay still apparently insensible; and, so utterly devoid was I of any thought or care of life, now I had lost all that rendered it of any value to me, that not one murmur of remonstrance did I utter, not one token of animation did I give to prevent their consigning me to this living death. I remained in a kind of dumb stupor, almost like a corpse in their arms, as they lowered me into a small boat in which I was rowed to land, where they placed me on a ledge of rock just beyond the sands; the boat then returning to the ship, which set sail again immediately. Not one sensation approaching to regret or added horror, at thus finding myself abandoned on a lone shore to perish, was I conscious of feeling. My one great grief had swallowed up and effaced all lesser and merely personal considerations. If I felt anything at all, it was a kind of vague wonder (which I remember crossed my mind in the strange way that the like trivial fancies will wander into one's brain at such moments) that these ruffians, who could cold-bloodedly doom me to such a fate, should yet lift me gently and with an

almost cautious softness, as they conveyed me from their vessel to the boat, and from the boat to the shore. But I think there is a sort of natural and innate tenderness that inspires every sailor, however rough, when he touches a woman.

“Heaven help me! I surely needed tenderness then, or never poor creature did in this world! I verily believe, I should have remained there without moving a limb or exerting a muscle towards my own preservation: when, as I lay, I suddenly became conscious of warm human breath close to my face, as if some one were leaning over to examine me nearly; and, as I listlessly opened my eyes (for nothing could rouse me to any feeling half so active as that of surprise), I beheld a black countenance close to mine, and peering into it anxiously and wonderingly.

“I closed my eyes again with a deep sigh; but soon felt that soothing and prodigal attentions were bestowed upon me, and the most earnest means taken to restore me to sensation and life. I felt my head gently raised, and placed caressingly on the bosom of a young girl who knelt beside me, murmuring words of affectionate soothing, which, though uttered in an unknown tongue, were in melodious tones. Her dark exterior concealed a heart glowing with kind feeling, and beneath her swart skin throbbed a bosom instinct with every generous impulse and feminine softness. Poor, meek, affectionate, unselfish Kallisah! Your gentle goodness and fostering care were but ill met and rewarded by my sullen grief and despondent apathy! When I look back

now, with the clearer vision of approaching death, to this period, I feel how blameably ungrateful and unmindful I was of the boon accorded to me by a merciful Creator, in the shape of this simple black girl, who would have been a comfort and support to any less wilfully repining spirit than mine. As it was, I rather yielded to, than accepted, her cherishing care; and permitted her attention and hospitality, instead of receiving them with the warmth of welcome and mutual affection. From that first evening, when, finding me alone and perishing, she restored me to consciousness, and led me to her cave, her conduct was marked by one unceasing course of lavish solicitude and prodigal attachment; met on my part—I now shame to feel and avow—by unthankful negligence, cold indifference, and mere selfish indulgence in my own sorrow.

“Day after day, week after week, month after month, did I yield to my absorbing misery; and, wandering away from her companionship, would sit brooding on this rocky point in solitary despair, gazing over the wide waters, fixing my eyes on the dim speck of the horizon which I believed to be the land that contained all I held dear—my beloved husband—from whom I had been so rudely torn, and so cruelly and eternally separated.

“Here would I sit for hours, absorbed in this one engrossing idea, delivering myself over to voluntary gloom and despair. Not once did I seek help and courage from the society of Kallisah, or by relieving her from part of her household duties, give wholesome

exertion to my frame, and, by using the body, endeavour to strengthen the mind. Equally unmindful of her feelings—wounded, as they must be by my cold, ungrateful neglect, as of my own moral health, I suffered myself to become a mere inert lump of uselessness, and the morbid victim of a diseased imagination. Even the conviction that I was shortly to become a mother had scarce power to raise me from my lethargy, or turn my thoughts to any subject apart from the one which filled my soul with a single yearning desire, and kept my straining eyes fixed on that dimly-seen, far-away, coveted shore. Some lines that I had once read in an old play-book, often wandered into my musing brain, and I would frequently mutter to myself,

‘ Like one that stands upon a promontory,
And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,
Wishing his foot were equal with his eye ;
And chides the sea that sunders him from thence,
Saying—he ’ll lade it dry to have his way.’

“But more than all—more than any hope of lading the sea dry, did I long for wings—for wings that I might skim the surface of the waters, and clear the space that held me from my Felix. Had I but wings! then would I soar over these relentless waves that rolled in ceaseless mockery of my anguish, raising eternal barriers between me and my beloved, and there would I find blessed peace in his arms. Had I but the power of flight! This was the longing desire that haunted me ever, and ever, and ever. What wonder, then, that when my baby was

born, he was born with wings? An angel-token sent from heaven, of warning for past misused faculties, of hopeful strength for the future.

“‘The advent of this cherub, truthfully read and rightly used, might have proved such a token to his poor mother, but, weakly passive by nature, and totally unskilled in mental discipline, she was regardless of the blessed influence, and remained blind to the alleviations with which heaven had balanced the one great sorrow in her lot. But keenly, though tardily awake as I am, to my mistaken existence—an existence consumed rather than spent—I must not dwell upon my sad story longer than necessary, Kit. You must have heard enough to learn a serious lesson of the folly and wickedness of allowing the mind to dwell unhealthfully upon one single thought, and of permitting the imagination to become diseased, and to destructively prey upon the body. I will merely tell you the events that succeeded the birth of my boy, during which period of pain and suffering I was waited upon and tended night and day by my gentle Kallisah, the tenderest and most solicitous of nurses. The whole time I was thus confined to the cave, she would quietly sit by the side of my bed, heaping up the skins with which it was spread, arranging them beneath my weary head, and comfortably disposing them around my exhausted frame; her skill in herbal preparations, and cooling drinks from fruit and berry were inexhaustible; and they were administered to my fevered lips with tones of healing comfort and soothing encouragement. Her affectionate nature

inspired her with devices that supplied the place of experience and skill ; and, as I gradually recovered, she would, with unwearied patience and inventive fancy, beguile the passing hours, in relating her history by means of emphatic tones and expressive gestures. I learned that she had been carried off by a slave-ship from her native country ; that, in the course of the voyage, a British vessel had attacked the one in which she was ; and that, with the cruelty frequently practised by slave-ships under pursuit, the captain had thrown her overboard, with many others of her wretched companions, into the sea, to lessen his freight to the prescribed number of victims, should he be overtaken and examined. Young and active, she had contrived to swim on shore : alone, however ; for whether taken up by the British ship, rescued by other means, or drowned in the sea, she could not tell, but not one of her unhappy companions had ever reached that land. Hardy, and from childhood accustomed to depend greatly on her own exertions for obtaining the means of existence, she readily found food in this fertile place, which abounded in fruit and vegetables of various kinds ; the cave afforded her commodious shelter, and the pursuits of her early savage home had taught her skill sufficient to add many advantages to these natural ones of mere food and shelter. She fashioned rude tools, which enabled her to put a paling round the enclosed space in which she kept her cows and goats ; a well-directed missile from her practised hand, and impelled by the strength of her youthful arm (the vigour of which no

enervating habits of civilized life had weakened and impaired), would frequently procure her the comfort and luxurious warmth of some wild animal's skin for her couch; and thus, when my destiny threw me on this shore, it came that she was so well provided with means for the hospitable welcome with which her kind nature prompted her to greet the poor wanderer. How was it that I could remain insensible to so much goodness as shone conspicuous in the gentle character of this child of nature, enshrined though it was in an ebon casket. But it was not the dark exterior, it was the mist of self-indulgence and uncontrolled passion that veiled my eyes, and shrouded the priceless gem from my view! But no more of this! Suffice it, that not even her gentle tendance in my time of trouble effected the cure of my mental blindness. It was decreed that by her loss alone could I be brought to a sense of the invaluable treasure I possessed in her, with the consequent perception of my own previous ingratitude, and the perverse aid which it had afforded Fate in my martyrdom.

“ One evening, not very long before your arrival here, Kit, when Felix was little more than a twelve-month old, I returned to the cave somewhat surprised that I had not been fetched home by the faithful Kallisah, who used to bring Felix to my rocky seat, and then return with us to the afternoon meal, which her own activity and skill had meanwhile prepared. I found my boy alone, restless, and almost fretful at the absence of his affectionate nurse and playfellow, who was nowhere to be seen. I com-

forted the child, and taking him in my arms, we sought through all the recesses of the cave, through all the neighbouring nooks of the rock, in the paddock, every where around, but in vain—no Kallisah! Nor did she come that evening, or that night, through the dark hours of which, I kept restless vigil, listening vainly for her approaching steps, and striving to still the moaning and plaintive wail of my little Felix, who was uneasy at missing his kind and loving friend.

“Next morning, as soon as the sun had risen, taking my child in my arms (for he had now fallen into a heavy slumber, in which I dared not leave him, lest he should wake in my absence), I set forth in quest of my faithful companion, dreading some fatal accident had befallen her, as nothing else, I felt, would have prevented her returning to us before. My fears were too speedily verified. I had not proceeded many hundred paces into the little wood which skirts the grassy plains adjoining the cave, before I beheld my poor Kallisah stretched beneath the trees, a disfigured lifeless corse! Her dark skin prevented the appearance of any discolouring marks of the poison, but the swollen flesh, the starting eye balls, the distorted mouth, told but too plainly the secret of her death, and gave distinct evidence of her having been attacked by a serpent, and mortally wounded by its deadly fang. The thought of sparing my child from the horror of this ghastly spectacle, gave me strength to dig a hasty shallow grave in the soil, which was fortunately of a light and crumbling

nature ; and with the help of boughs and leaves I succeeded in concealing the body of my hapless friend, and affording it the respect of a slight though bowery tomb ; so that by the time Felix awoke, I had not only conveyed him from the spot, but had saved him from any risk of encountering so sad an object, in case his wings should by chance convey him to this neighbourhood. For, I should tell you, that his power of flight had preceded the ability to run alone, which generally begins to manifest itself, I believe, in children of about his age ; and I often dreaded that this gift of winged strength in my boy might prove a source of anxiety to me, lest he should wander beyond my care, and inflict upon me the pang of losing a second Felix. However, he has never hitherto been able to effect any long flight, and I suppose it was in attempting one of greater distance than usual, in the direction of the sea, that caused him to seek rest and protection in your boat when you were approaching this shore. If a mother's judgment may be trusted on such a point, his wings are an additional charm to the many beauties that render him one of the loveliest and most interesting beings that ever breathed ; and his affectionate loving nature shews itself in every infantine caress, and tender fondling, which he lavishes on his poor mother, as well as in the constancy with which he long pined after his faithful nurse,—the lost Kallisah ! But it is this singular beauty of his, both in frame and nature, that makes me surpassingly anxious with respect to his future fate, and bids me secure your

friendship and protection for my orphan child.' The lone mother fixed her eyes wistfully on mine as she paused, and after I had in a few warm and fervent words assured her that my affection for the interesting little creature equalled, if possible, her own; and that nothing should henceforth part me from him while we both lived, she pressed my hand, and concluded her story in the following words: 'For my own part, I shared the regret of my little one for the loss of Kallisah, and mourned for her as perseveringly as he did; but her death first opened my eyes to the error of my past conduct, and awakened fears for the future. Should my child be deprived of my care as he had been of hers, by any adverse and unforeseen accident, what was to become of him? These thoughts, and many other associated reflections, now shared my lonely musings with the one theme which had formerly been their only object; for so inveterate a thing is a habit of reverie, and an indulgence in solitude, that I still wandered daily to my rocky seat, and pursued my usual contemplation of the wide and ever-restless sea. In this state of awakened conscience and motherly solicitude you found me, Kit, on your arrival; and I had not known you long, before your frank nature, your generous anxiety to win me from my sorrows, and above all, your evident attachment to my boy, led me to confide in you, and place all my hope for my boy's future welfare in your promise to adopt him. This hope is now realized by your assurances, in which I have full faith, and I have nothing now left to wish

for, but that I may be speedily called to meet my beloved husband in a happier and a better world.' The poor young mother rose as she finished speaking, for the sun was declining from the meridian, and Felix began to shew symptoms of hungry anxiety to return to the cave, that he might have his dinner, which had been delayed somewhat beyond his usual hour by the long narrative his mother had been giving me.

"She was greatly exhausted, and did not rally at all after our meal; so that when I took leave of her for the night, my fears were joined to her own convictions that she was not destined long to remain on this earth, and they kept me some time awake in sorrowing sympathy for her fate. Just as I was sinking into a feverish slumber, however, I thought I heard a stifled groan, followed by a feeble cry. I started up, and listened intently, as I hurried on some clothing, and prepared to hasten forth. As I listened, the cry was repeated, and I was not long in finding my way through the labyrinths of the cave towards the space occupied by my hostess as her own sleeping apartment. It was near the outer part of the cavern; and, through some fissures and chasms of the rock, the light of a southern moon streamed in rays of softened splendour, and revealed to me a scene which will never be effaced from my memory. The poor young mother lay lifeless on her couch, while her child had crawled along the bed towards her on his hands and knees, and was hanging over her in all the terror and grief of finding her insensible to his cries

and inarticulate entreaties. As he knelt there in the moonlight, looking at her motionless form, with his bent head, his drooping wings, and his little clasped hands extended towards the object of his infantine grief, they looked like a marble group of Death, mourned by Seraph Innocence. But I recovered from the spell by which I was held for a moment in contemplation of this touching picture, and soon rallied all my courage to soothe and comfort my baby friend, and it was not very long before I succeeded in wiling him from the side of his dead mother. But though he was gentle, and yielded quietly to all my efforts to beguile his grief, I could perceive that he had not the usual facile spirits of childhood; he dwelt with a pertinacity foreign to his age, on the idea of his departed mother, and the remembrance of her pale face haunted his young imagination. He drooped visibly; and even after she had been removed (for I had taken the opportunity one night when he was in a profound sleep to pay her the last sad duties of interment) he would seek her still with wistful eyes, and evidently missed her in her accustomed seat and wonted places. I had buried her in a grassy spot of earth close to the nook among the rocks where she had spent so many lonely hours, and had pleased myself with the thought that it was in all probability the very spot she would herself have best approved. Hither her little son would now frequently draw me, as if aware of the vicinity where his mother lay; but it was in all probability from a fond clinging to the place where he

had so frequently beheld her,—on the rocky seat commanding a view of the sea.

“He and I were sitting here one day, he fluttering to and fro, taking short circling flights over the sea, and skimming lightly just above the surface of the waves, while I flattered myself with the pleasing hope of his reviving health and spirits; when suddenly I heard voices at a little distance, and on listening attentively I heard them again, and became more and more convinced that they were human tones, and proceeded from that part of the sea-shore beyond the rocks which lay between it and the spot where I had landed. I placed Felix softly on the rocky seat, and, charging him to remain there till I came back, I hastened in the direction whence I had heard the voices. On arriving at the sea-shore, which formed a sort of miniature bay on the coast, I perceived a party of sailors who had just landed from a boat that lay to, and who were in evident quest of fresh water. I went towards them and offered my services to lead them to a spring which welled forth its delicious waters near to the cave which formed my habitation, as I could then provide them with rest, shelter, and food, with a draught of milk in addition to the water they sought, and which I knew would prove welcome refreshment to sea-faring men. They accepted my proposal with the same frankness with which it was made, and we returned in the direction I had come; this led across the rocks, as I have said, towards the spot where I myself had originally landed, and then to the cave itself close by. As we crossed

the rocky pass, I looked eagerly for Felix, and approached the seat where I had left him, a few paces in advance of the party. An instant after, I heard the report of a gun close behind me, and the words: 'By Jove! I saw a curious large bird fly up! I'll have him!' I sprung forward just in time to catch my little Felix in my arms as he sunk bleeding on the grassy mound which covered the remains of his poor mother. An affectionate look—a fluttering sigh—an expiring breath—and the gentle spirit of this angel child had fled to its kindred heaven, leaving his mortal frame in my embrace, inanimate and motionless—winged though it was!

“The whole seemed like a dream, so quickly had it all passed; but, alas! it was too fatally true, and I had indeed lost the lovely cherub who had twined itself so closely about my heart, and engaged so powerfully my best affections. But a few moments since, instinct with life and beauty, and now, dead! gone for ever!

“The sailors, awed by the accident which their heedless love of sport had occasioned, tendered me their rough but honest sympathy. Aided by them, we soon dug a grave for my poor lost Felix, and he was laid gently and reverently by the side of his dead mother in her grave; and, when they were covered with the grassy sod again, and hidden for ever from my view, my manhood failed me, and I wept bitter tears. I turned from the spot hallowed by so many mournful recollections; I was followed by the party of strangers; and the cares of hospi-

tality in which their presence necessarily involved me, did the usual part of unselfish exertion in forming a distraction for my thoughts, and aiding me to throw off my load of sorrow for a time. It was agreed among my guests, that they should spend a night on land with me; and that on the next day we should all set sail, they taking me away in their company, as the thought of remaining in this place was now become insupportable, bereft as I was of all that endeared it to me. But when night came, and I was left alone, after having seen to the accommodation of all the party, the weight of my grief returned upon me again. I resolutely struggled against its oppressive ascendancy, and endeavoured to soothe myself with the reflection, that my little Felix was now at rest with his mother, who had loved him so well; and that he was thus secured against the possible evils that might have attended his future fate. Singularly gifted as he was, might not his mother's fears have predicted truly that he was unfitted for an existence among the common run of human beings? And, as it was more than probable that my thirst for adventure and active life would lead me to quit this solitary shore, should I not then have exposed him to the risk of mingling with an uncongenial race? Somewhat consoled with these thoughts, I yielded to their composing influence, and slept.

“A solemn apparition visited my slumbers, and inspired gracious comfort and elevating trust. Methought I beheld the moonlit group of mother and child as I had witnessed it in the cavern, on the

night of her death; but in my present dream her marble countenance beamed with a heavenly joy, and her young boy's face reflected the hopeful smile which irradiated hers. The scene faded, and was replaced by the outlines of the seat among the rocks, with the adjacent grassy mound that enclosed the remains of the lone mother and child; but as I gazed, and the traces of the well-known spot assumed distinctness, I beheld my sweet Felix in his mother's arms, their countenances still wreathed in smiles; while close beside them stood a youthful manly form which I knew, methought, at once, for that of Felix Morton, the long-mourned husband. The figure pointed proudly and fondly to his wife and child, and bent his eyes with benignant approval upon myself;—then, while the group turned eyes of loving gratitude towards me in tender farewell, they expanded their wings (with which the parents were now furnished in common with their seraph child,) and all three floated gently away through the air across the sea, and soaring, were soon lost to view amid the realms of light beyond the sky.

“Next morning, invigorated and consoled by this beatific vision, I arose with new strength and spirits for my re-entrance into the world, and its various duties and pursuits; and I prepared to set forth with my new associates in quest of fresh adventures. I had not joined them long, however, before I found they were not companions greatly to my taste. The crew were not exactly bad men, but they were selfish, addicted to low tastes, coarse almost to brutality, and

ignorant ; which last word, perhaps, accounts for all their other characteristics. The captain was vain, capricious, weak to a fault, and a glutton ; and the mate, who had headed the party that landed for fresh water on the shore where I had lately sojourned, was a hard wiry man, with thin white lips, and eyes that never looked any one directly in the face who chanced to address him suddenly.

“ Let me own that I early felt a prejudice against this man, when I learned that he was the person who had fired the unlucky shot which destroyed my little Felix ; but as I was conscious of my prejudice, I endeavoured not to let it sway me unfairly, knowing that the accident was unintentional ; and that, therefore, neither this, nor the man’s mere looks, ought to warrant my entertaining an actual dislike towards him, until I found more substantial reasons in his conduct and actions.

“ Instead of the books and intelligent conversation that formed the chief delights of my earliest friends, the shipmates of my first voyage, these present associates took pleasure in games of hazard, betting, &c., and their usual consequences followed—idle habits, frequent bickerings, coarse language, with mutual ill-will and mistrust of each othere. I would not condemn the use of harmless pastime for sailors, or banish amusement from among them, far from it ; but let them, if they are wise, choose games of skill rather than of chance, and abjure all betting and laying of wagers, as breeders of discord and vice. I did all I could to dissuade my new acquaintances from con-

tinuing their practice, by endeavouring to introduce what I believed to be more attractive, as well as higher pursuits; but I soon discovered that it merely caused me to be looked upon as a troublesome meddler, and I accordingly contented myself with declining to join their favorite kind of sports, while I bore, as well as I could, their taunting hints of my being 'a conceited young prig, and a miserly youngster who wanted to save his money.' The faculty of bearing taunts good-humouredly, I have always found to be an excellent means of disarming malice, as well as a good sort of discipline for one's own temper. I would have all youths cultivate it in their outset of life, my dear Dick, and also the power of steadily, as well as good-humouredly, saying, 'No,' when asked to join in a pursuit you think dishonourable, or even frivolous. This is a power especially valuable on board a ship—which is a sort of world in miniature—where you have to create a character for yourself among your associates, and to teach them to esteem and respect as well as like you.

"To return to the crew, of which I at this time formed one:—They continued their mode of recreation, in which they were unchecked, as unobserved, by their captain, who found his own peculiar diversion in dressing himself, contemplating himself when dressed, and pampering his appetite to the utmost of the limited extent within his power—a sea-faring life not affording many opportunities of epicurean indulgence. All these employments, of course, occupied a great deal of his time, and prevented his having

much leisure for making himself acquainted with the pursuits of his men during their hours of relaxation, or for endeavouring profitably to direct their tastes and amusements.

“One day,—but I declare,” said Kit, interrupting himself, “it is getting late, so we must break off our yarn for this evening. Good night, my dear young friends.”

“I’m so sorry we must go,” said Fanny. “I’m always fond of the words ‘One day’ in a story, and so impatient to listen on; because then I know there’s something new going to happen.”

“But you shall hear to-morrow what happened ‘one day,’ my lass,” said the old mariner; “and so once again, Good night, and be off with you both, without another word!”

CHAPTER IV.

KIT'S THIRD YARN.—A PEEP INTO FABLE-LAND.—TITTA, THE ITALIAN CABIN-BOY ; STEVENS, THE MATE.—THE STORM.—THE DECISION OF THE DICE.—THE WRECK.

“ ‘ ONE day ! ’—Well, Kit,—‘ one day ! ’ exclaimed both the young Swallows, as they flew breathlessly into the old mariner's cottage early the following evening ; “ now tell us all about what took place ‘ one day,’ when you had joined your new ship's company.”

“ Why, ‘ one day,’ when I had been among them about a fortnight,” said Kit, “ and had had time to make up my mind a little as to what kind of chaps they were, as I told you last evening, we neared the coast of a country that seemed flourishing and beautiful ; and nothing would suit the captain but that one of the crew should go ashore and fetch him some game, and a pine-apple or two for his table. The men were most of them deeply engaged in a game of loo, I think they called it, and the others were as anxiously interested about the issue of some wager or other depending on a rat-hunt down in the hold of the vessel ; so that I found it would be acceptable to all parties if I offered to undertake the execution of this commission myself. This suited me exactly ;

for I felt no objection to a few hours absence from company so little congenial to me, as well as from my always being ready for any thing that promised change and novelty of adventure.

“On landing, I found I was in the vicinity of a village, that seemed to form one of the suburbs to a large town that lay about a mile and a half distant from the spot where I then was. Mindful of my commission, I looked everywhere about for pines, and pheasants, or partridges. None however, could I spy, though I looked diligently around. Neat cottages, gardens, trim orchards, paddocks, and meadows were there on all sides, much as in England, reminding me of my own lovely native village; and then I recollected that a simple country hamlet would not be so likely to afford the delicacies I sought, as a large town; so, in the direction of the one I perceived in the distance, I forthwith determined to proceed. As I walked through the village, I noticed that I met not a single human being, and just as this circumstance struck me, happening to glance in at a cottage window, I beheld a comely tortoiseshell Cat busily engaged in frying some veal-cutlets that were hissing in a pan on the fire. As I watched her, I was amused to see the gravity and orderly manner in which she pursued her culinary avocations,—pressing the morsels now and then gently with a fork, and shifting them occasionally in the pan, that they might not burn. When they were nearly done to her satisfaction, she drew off the gloves she had worn to preserve her hands from the scorching effects

of the fire (which slight circumstance told me at once that she could be no mere common cook) and tying a neat white apron on, she proceeded to lay the cloth, and then drawing an arm-chair to that part of the dinner-table where she had placed the lemon and cayenne by the side of a plate and folded napkin, she quickly dished the cutlets, and, placing them on the table, ran towards a side door that led to a small parlour, and called to some one, saying :—‘Dinner’s quite ready, captain.’ This was answered by a voice that said ‘And I’m quite ready for dinner, I can assure you, Mrs. Capsicum, my darling;’ and then, in walked an old Goat in faded regimentals, with his gouty legs swathed in flannels. He seemed to me to be a retired half-pay officer, who having been a rover in his youth, had settled down comfortably and soberly in his old age by marrying his housekeeper; who appeared indeed, to be quite a domestic animal, and to take excellent care of her lord and master. I left them cosily seated opposite each other, enjoying their meal, just as he had leaned across the table to chuck her under the chin, while he tossed off a glass of old madeira to her good health, with a playful wink.

“A little further on, I came to a humble porch with a low plank placed across the door—and peeping in, I beheld, ranged along the sanded floor, half a dozen dwarf benches, on which were perched rows of tender fledglings, and almost callow nestlings, whose infant studies were superintended by a grave old Owl, birch-rod in hand, who raised her spectacled eyes

from the primer she held in the other, as she glanced towards me, to discover what intruder darkened the doors of her dame-school.

“In a meadow just on the outskirts of the village, I saw a large party of Grasshoppers enjoying a hearty game of Cricket; and among them I observed a Bat, who flitted about to and fro, doing great execution, and taking a remarkably active part in the game.

“As I hastened on, and entered the town, I overtook a demure-looking Hen, a schoolmistress, marshalling her pretty Chickens two by two, as they returned from a rural walk, and gathering them carefully under her protective wings at the least approach of danger. I saw her cast a very anxious and suspicious glance at a Wolf, on the opposite side of the way, walking arm-in-arm with an innocent little Lamb, whom he was luring to destruction, by leading her to a milliner's window, and pointing to a chip bonnet trimmed with orange blossoms and bridal veil, while he induced her to listen to his false vows.

“I found I was now in the principal street of the town, for there was plenty of bustle and some very showy shops; but not one poulterer's or fruiterer's could I discover, where I could make the purchases I came for. As I stood on the pavement, irresolute what I had best do, a state carriage rolled by, in which sat a sleek and portly Mare, whose gown and chain sufficiently bespoke the principal civil functionary, while, on the seat opposite sat a lively Turtle, entertaining his friend with rich aldermanic

jokes and fat unctuous jests, on their way to the Hall of Justice.

“Then came by a handsome chariot, in which reclined a skilful Leech, in a suit of shining black, with a neatly powdered wig and a gold-headed cane, as he drove towards the mansion of a graceful Swan, celebrated for her beauty, her stately mien and aristocratic airs, who was one of his best lady-patients.

“Presently I was jostled as I stood on the pavement, by two friends who passed arm-in-arm, one of whom, a great Boar, held the other tightly by the button-hole, and insisted upon inflicting an evidently unwelcome long story upon his companion, a Hog, who remained as obstinate as a pig, and only replied by an occasional grunt of disgust, declaring it made him as sulky as a bear to be so badgered.

“As I had made up my mind by this time, that I would not return to the ship with my errand unaccomplished, I determined to wait where I was until the following morning in hopes of better success; and as it was now past five o'clock, I looked about in search of an hotel where I might dine and secure a bed for the night. I perceived a respectable-looking tavern at a little distance, bearing the sign of the ‘Hook;’ and entering, I found in the hall the landlord, a grinning Fox, who bowed to the ground as he assured me I could have a well-aired bed, and that a dinner should be prepared for me immediately. He told me he would send a chambermaid to shew me to my room; and, while I awaited her coming, I per-

ceived a Cormorant in a small private room on one side of the passage, gorging a profuse dinner, including 'every delicacy of the season,' all by himself; and on the opening of a door opposite I obtained a view of the commercial room, where two grinning Spoonbills and a Wagtail were enjoying a poor little lark between them, and cutting up a miserable snipe that seemed roasted to rags.

"The chambermaid, a brisk busy little Bee, now approached, and flitted up stairs before me; and I had not to wait very long for my dinner, which was served by a smart young Dog of a waiter, who fetched and carried the several dishes to and fro with great fidelity and assiduity. He appeared to be a cross between a terrier and a poodle, though the next morning when I gave him my parting fee, he manifested tokens of being rather of the spaniel breed; for he fawned upon me prodigiously and almost licked my hand. When the third course of the dinner was served, however, he proved himself an admirable pointer, as the game came upon table, and throughout the meal was a faithful and attentive guide to the various tit-bits, when I was blind to my own gastronomic interests by selecting less excellent morsels than his practised scent enabled him to discover for me. He shewed great sagacity upon other points too; for, during dessert, meditating how I should pass the evening, I enquired of him what amusements there were in the town, and what theatres were open, when he replied, that, if he were me he should endeavour to obtain a stall at the opera, as there was

an excellent company here now. He was very eloquent upon this subject, and, indeed, appeared to be quite a musical connoisseur, and well versed in all the opera cabals and theatrical tittle-tattle, for he proceeded to say: 'O yes, sir, you must go this evening. The celebrated prima donna, the Nightingale, appears to-night in her favourite character of Norma. There is also an excellent tenor—a fine game cock—who is known under the *sobriquet* of 'Chanticleer.' He certainly is first-rate; but he has the defect of being a dreadful intriguer, getting up all sorts of shameful cabals in the theatre; trying to make the public believe that the Nightingale is as hoarse as a raven, by getting his friend the Puffin, who is the editor of our leading journal, to write all sorts of fibs about her; and he has even been known to send a flock of Geese into the pit on the nights of her new characters. The fact is, Chanticleer is never satisfied unless he has all his own way in the theatre, and is made perfect cock of the walk. The right of crowing over the rest to this extent, is disputed with him by the leader of the band, a pert Sparrow, who is never satisfied unless he is playing first fiddle wherever he is. It is rumoured,' pursued my voluble informant, 'that the great Star-fish is expected down here shortly, to play a round of all his grandest tragic characters; but as they propose giving him the off-nights with the Nightingale (who, in my opinion is a perfect duck), it is expected that he will decline the offered engagement. There was a foolish Donkey who attempted to draw in comedy, about a month since, but he only

proved himself an ass, and not worth his salary of thistles.' The impudent Dog, my waiter, rattled off all this theatrical scandal and chit-chat with a glib ease that took away my breath; but he was presently called away by the chambermaid, who rated him for a lazy hound, an idle cur, a contemptible mongrel, and I know not what offensive and discourteous names besides. Not feeling much inclination to go and shut myself up in a hot theatre, for it was a lovely evening still, I strolled out for another lounge through the streets, feeling sure of meeting with plenty to amuse me till bed-time.

"The first thing I saw were three or four old Cats, with baskets and bags hanging on their arms full of worsted work, tatting and notting, netting and knitting needles; they were evidently going out to a tea-party, a dish of scandal, and a hand at cards. In their company there was a younger one, a playful little Puss, who frisked hither and thither, and seemed immensely to disconcert her aunts, the old tabbies, by her kittenish tricks. Later, I noticed a grave black Tom, their footman, proceeding with a lantern, umbrella, several pairs of pattens and clogs, and a heap of calashes and cloaks for his mistresses, to fetch them home after their card-party.

"My attention was attracted to the cab of an old Lion, who was lolling back, driving easily and complacently, with his eye-glass stuck in one eye; on the seat beside him, I perceived a roll of paper, so that I immediately guessed he was going out to read a new manuscript play to a circle of admiring friends.

At the back of the cab, swung a spruce young Tiger in white knee-cords and top-boots.

“I sauntered on, past a cigar shop, where I beheld three or four foolish young Puppies, among whom I distinguished my impudent Dog of a waiter, smartly dressed, and smoking with the rest; all evidently flattering themselves that they looked the height of fashion, and the supreme of gentlemanly elegance. I also passed a large well-lighted gaming-house, up the steps of which were flocking a crowd of Gulls, Rooks, Pigeons, and Geese, in company with several Ponies. This was not the only place in the town where I met with Gulls; on the contrary, they seemed to abound in most of the public thoroughfares; I noticed a group of them in red coats, loitering near a barrack, or guard-house, while a few more in the guise of country clowns, stood gaping and staring at a Kite, who wore the cap and many-coloured floating ribands of a recruiting-officer. Others too, I observed peering earnestly in at a lottery-office window, where the prizes were displayed in large figures; and still larger numbers were lingering in the doorway of a railway share office, where they were joined by a herd of Stags. Out of one of the inns of court, I saw a Shark issue forth dressed like a lawyer, and followed by a clerkly Pike, who endeavoured to satisfy the numerous complaints of a shoal of client Gudgeons, who glided swiftly in their wake, vainly endeavouring to snatch a few crumbs of comfort about some pending suit.

“There was a mischievous Monkey goading and

worrying a slow Tortoise and an obstinate Mule that he had harnessed together, in order that he might grin and chatter at this ill-assorted pair he was trying to drive; but not one creature of my own race did I perceive throughout my walk that evening. However, although I met no human inhabitant in this country, yet I saw traces which indicated that they were not unknown here; for, in one of the public squares of the town, I saw some monuments which appeared to be raised in honour of individuals of the species, who seemed to be renowned in this land. They were marble statues placed on pedestals which severally bore the names of Phædrus, La Fontaine, Gellert, Lessing, and Gay; and it could not be for the beauty of their form that these statues were erected, for, among them, I noticed one of a little, crooked, hump-backed fellow, whose pedestal displayed the word Æsop.

“The next morning I rose betimes, determined to pursue my search for the game and pine desired by my captain, still more diligently than I had done on the previous evening; and, despairing of meeting with what I wanted in the town, as it contained neither of the shops that sold the articles I wanted, I sallied forth into the country again, only stopping for five minutes to look at a gay wedding-party that came trooping out of a church door as I passed. A pair of Turtles came first (the bride all of a flutter), and were followed by a circle of attendant Ring-doves, their relations; then the happy couple, mated for life, hopped into a travelling carriage with four

horses, and set off on their wedding tour, that they might enjoy a short flight abroad before they settled down in their new cage, and prepared to build a nest for any young ones with whom they might hereafter be blest.

“I walked many miles before I discovered what I wanted. At last, about midday, to my great joy I approached a large preserve of game belonging to a fine estate; and here I doubted not I should succeed, as I beheld some glorious pheasants, hanging their sleek tails from the branches, and flitting about in great numbers among the trees. I was just preparing to secure a brace, when I recollected that I had no right to help myself to these birds without asking leave of their owner, for, though they were wild creatures originally, they were evidently not so here, but fed and preserved carefully. I walked on towards the great house, which I observed at a little distance, in the hope of meeting some one who could grant me the permission I hoped to gain; when, on peeping over a park paling, I beheld a gentlemanly Bull of prepossessing appearance, sauntering along beneath the shady trees at an easy pace, with his hands carelessly folded together behind his back beneath his coat tails. He was talking with two friends of his, neighbours; the one, an Otter, a keen sportsman, and the other, a Beaver, the owner of a fine estate containing both land and water. I found out these circumstances by their conversation, as well as that the gentlemanly Bull was a large landed proprietor, and, indeed, master of the house, the park,

the preserves, and the whole domain around us. He and his friends were deep in talk about the country, the government, the rights of landlords, the game-laws, &c., and I heard the gentlemanly Bull say—‘I never have stood for the county, and I never wish to be a member of parliament—I leave that for Rats and Cameleons ; but I do say this—I will have my game respected, and I never will forgive a poacher.’

“ ‘Why, now, you know, Squire Bull,’ replied the Otter, ‘that your law is always worse than your gore ; and as to ‘never forgiving a poacher,’ didn’t you let that fellow off the other day that was found sneaking in your preserves, only because he told some whining excuse about his wife and family starving, which made you order him some good broth for them, and some bread and cheese for himself, telling him with a pretendedly gruff bellow, that they were far fitter food for such as he and his, than hares and pheasants?’

“ ‘And when that farmer was brought up before your brother magistrate,’ added the beaver, ‘for carrying a gun in the shooting season, and the chap talked some shuffling palaver about its being very hard to have his grain devoured, and his young crops destroyed, didn’t you burst out into a loud roar that startled the court, and declare that the man was in the right?’

“The gentlemanly Bull looked down and blushed deeply at these retorts from his friends, whose charges he could not deny, and, with a bashful admission of his weakness, owned that he did not mind giving his game, but that he hated to have it taken.

“ On hearing this, I took courage, and stepping lightly over the paling, I presented myself before the three country gentlemen; and making a low obeisance to Squire Bull, I presented my captain’s compliments, and told him what I sought in his name.

“ The gentlemanly animal replied with a benevolent courtesy of manner that did not belie his agreeable aspect and bland expression of countenance; for, desiring I would offer his compliments in return to my captain, he called to a Hind who stood at a little distance in a countryman’s frock, and bid him go with me up to the great house, and see that his orders were executed with regard to my having what game I chose, with a couple of the finest fruit his pinery could afford; ending all with requesting me to be sure and drink a large mug of home-brewed ale in his kitchen before I left the premises. Having enjoyed his good cheer with extra relish for the hearty manner in which it was bestowed; and having drunk the gentlemanly Bull’s health, with sincere wishes for his continued prosperity (of which he made such excellent use), and long life to him, I quitted the estate, and made the best of my way to the sea-shore, and on board ship, delighted with my trip and pleasant peep into what I could conclude to be no other than the far-famed Fable-Land. Contrary to my expectation, I escaped all reproach from the captain on the score of my delay and night’s absence. He was too well satisfied with my success in procuring him the desired delicacies, to grudge the time spent in obtaining them. The

ship proceeded on her voyage, and the only circumstance that relieved the disagreeable monotony of my existence among people so repugnant to me as her crew, was a sort of attachment that had sprung up between myself and a poor Italian lad called Titta, who had been picked up as an extra cabin-boy at Genoa, some weeks since, when the ship was short of hands.

“It was from a feeling of sympathy for his forlorn condition, that first awakened this attachment on my part ; for, from his speaking a different language from themselves, the men, who were too brutal to make any effort to understand or communicate with one so insignificant in their eyes, either jeered at his ‘foreign lingo,’ or neglected and despised him altogether. My sympathy was afterwards heightened by indignation, when I found that Titta (which is the abbreviation for Battista, one of the commonest of Italian Christian-names) was the constant object of Stevens’s injustice and cruel tyranny. This Stevens (the mate, whom I before mentioned as having excited an early prejudice in my feelings towards him, by his ill-looking countenance, and by his having occasioned the death of my little Felix) seemed to take a malicious pleasure in heaping insult and contumely of all kinds upon young Titta ; besides savagely setting him tasks beyond his strength, subjecting him to needless hardships, and exposing him to continued [damp and unduly protracted watches.

“To all these injuries from his tyrant, would Titta most frequently submit with patient resignation, and

a spirit of resolute endurance that might have touched a less vindictive villain than Stevens. At other times he would suffer with an air of dogged sullenness and dull obedience to the mate's commands, as those of his superior officer, and as such to be implicitly observed, however unjust or irksome; but there were moments when this usual bearing of poor Titta's was exchanged for one of haughty reprisal, and then the Italian lad's dark gleaming eyes would flash with proud disdain, reproach, and even defiance.

"Such instances, however, were rare, and evidently kept so by the ceaseless care and constant exertion of poor Titta himself, who maintained a strong guard upon his temper. He would bite his lips till the blood sprung, to repress the escape of a bitter expression. I have seen him close his eyes to veil their bright flashes, and imprison the indignant tears; while his pale, sallow cheek would assume an almost livid tint with the effort to check the sobs that swelled his heart to bursting.

"One night I had an early watch; after which, creeping below with the usual eagerness of a sailor for sleep, secure of being 'as fast as a church' within two seconds of his head touching his pillow after turning into his hammock, I stumbled over a cabin-boy who lay stretched across some planks below decks, and which only just prevented his lying in a pool of water that saturated the place just there. Perceiving it was Titta, I asked him how he came to sleep in such a damp unwholesome spot; when, telling me it was appointed by Stevens as his usual berth, he thanked

me, but said he did not much care about it, and only wished that was the worst he had to bear.

“This drew more expressions of sympathy from me, with questions as to what could be the cause of so much ill-will and malice on the part of Stevens, and if Titta himself could assign any grounds for the determined enmity he had evidently excited.

“‘But too well,’ replied the cabin-boy, in a hoarse whisper. ‘I have observed the kind feeling you have for me and my sufferings, Kit, and have frequently desired an opportunity of thanking you for it, and of giving you my confidence in return. No occasion has hitherto offered for speaking to you unheard, and I do not choose any one but my friend to be acquainted with my sufferings, and to give me their pity,’ continued the Italian in a proud tone; ‘I cannot stoop to receive commiseration from such men as the rest of our crew—but from a kind heart like yours, Kit, it will be a comfort and a joy to me; so, if you do not mind the damp, and the darkness, and the rats—I don’t, they are my bed-fellows too often—you can creep down here beside me, where we shall be sure not to be overheard.’ He then proceeded to tell me his simple history: how he had lived happily all his days with his mother and his pretty sister Peppina, in a little hut among the hills, not far from Genoa; that they had never known any trouble but poverty, and had never felt that, as long as they could get polenta or risotto enough to eat, until Peppina had reached sixteen years of age, when a young goatherd in the neighbourhood fell in love with her and she

with him, and that then they all for the first time regretted they were so poor as to prevent any hopes of marriage for the young couple. While things were in this state, and Titta was earnestly desiring to hit upon some method of making a fortune, that he might give it all to his dear Peppina and her lover, this ship had arrived in the port of Genoa; and the captain offering the situation of cabin-boy to Titta, he had eagerly closed with the proposal, as the desired means of obtaining money for his darling sister. Meanwhile this sister had been seen by Stevens, and her beauty had made so strong an impression upon him, that he had left no course untried to prevail upon her to give up the young goatherd, and accept himself. 'The evening before we set sail,' proceeded Titta, and I could hear the gasping agitation of his voice through its whispered tones, as he clutched my hand in his feverish grasp, 'that evening I overheard the villain endeavouring to persuade my Peppina to break her faith with her young lover, Gianni, to leave our fond mother and our humble cottage, and to go far away over the sea with him, where he would make her a princess of some beautiful island, and deck her in silks and satins, with bright jewels and a golden crown. Peppina knew better than to trust to his white face and black heart; and she told him firmly that she would not give up those she loved, to be made queen of the world. This so exasperated him, that, muttering something about knowing what was for her good better than she did, and carrying her off whether she would or no, the

ruffian was just about to throw his arms about her, and lift her from the spot by force, when I stepped forward, and bid him release my sister at his peril, as I had a stiletto, and knew how to use it. He flung her from him with a sneer, muttered a deep curse, and, turning on his heel, left us abruptly.

“‘Eager to carry out my project of earning money, and thinking I was secure of the captain’s protection from any ill-usage on the part of this man, should he hereafter resent the course I had taken in this scene, I hesitated not to fulfil my engagement, by sailing in the ship, as cabin-boy, on the following day. But, alas! I knew not how little reliance is to be placed on a weak master, too supinely devoted to his own luxuries to care whether justice is dealt among his subordinates; or how ingenious in torture a villain can be, who has to resent a by-gone injury inflicted on his victim by himself. By insinuation and example, he contrived to inspire his shipmates with contempt and dislike of me, and, by careful management, he conveyed enough of distrust and suspicion into the mind of his captain on my account, to cause him to issue an order that I should be closely searched and disarmed of my stiletto. After this, Stevens pursued his malignant hatred towards me with impunity; and I, feeling myself in his power and totally defenceless, ceased to contend with my fate, and endeavoured to submit without murmur to what I could not resist. I am too proud to bewail what I cannot repel; besides, I feel that when I look at him indignantly, I recall to him the recollection of my sister, and I would

not have even her image come near him, to be sullied and polluted by his contemplation.'

"I could hear that my companion ground his teeth fiercely, as he gave utterance to the proud writhings of his wounded heart; but he added more softly—'I have hoarded up all my scanty earnings, Kit, in the hope of one day returning with them to the hut among the hills; but I have sometimes of late thought that I am never destined to see my loved home more—I have a presentiment that I shall never live to return, and I want you to promise that the task of taking this hard-earned money to the mother and sister—to secure whose happiness and prosperity I would encounter even worse suffering than mine has been—shall be yours—your task, for the sake of your poor friend Titta. You will not refuse me, Kit? You will grant my request—will you not, Kit? The poor lad uttered all this in his broken English (which I have repeated in distinct words that you might the better comprehend, my dear young friends), but with an earnestness of tone and a vehemence of gesture which won my assurances of interest and consent. At the same time, I endeavoured to dissuade him from entertaining any superstitious doubt of his surviving to execute his own wishes with regard to the money, but told him I hoped to come to see him in Italy some day when he was cosily settled at home with his mother and sister in the hut among the hills. He only shook his head with a mournful smile, while he persisted in shewing me the small sum which he had secured in the corner of his neck-

handkerchief, and of which he made me again promise to take charge, and convey as he desired, in case I should survive him.

“After I had given him my solemn promise that nothing should prevent my fulfilling his wishes if I had life, we parted for the night; he, with an appearance of greater calm and satisfaction than I ever witnessed in him before, and I, filled with compassion and sympathy for this hapless youth. These feelings caused me to encounter Stevens the next morning with increased disgust and aversion; but soon, all other thoughts gave way to anxiety about the threatened change of weather; for, towards the afternoon, there was every appearance of a coming storm, and all hands were now aloft to prepare everything closereefed and trim against the expected contest with the elements. The sun sunk in sullen majesty, surrounded by angry louring copper-coloured heaps and heavy masses of purple vapour, interlaced with green streaks; whilst across the heavens swept tracks of rose-coloured clouds, sinister in their very beauty of tint, and foretelling violent wind. Night closed in with an awful calm, and a pause terrific in its very stillness; and then suddenly the tempest burst forth in all its fury, and raged incessantly for several hours. The billows rose mountain high on every side of us, the wind howled, and tore among the shrouds and rigging with boisterous force, the lightning darted its impetuous forked flames, the thunder rolled its solemn deep-toned wrath, and, in the midst, struggled our labouring vessel, the seeming victim of the sur-

rounding elements, and the disputed sacrifice of fire, air, and water. The scene was sublime in its awful peril; and, while my eyes swam, and my ears rung with the confusion of threatening sights and sounds that stunned and bewildered me, yet I was conscious of one added horror on that dreadful night apart from aught of storm or tempest.

“ About mid-watch I was startled by a piercing shriek, that thrilled high above the crash and din of the thunder-peals, and penetrated sharp athwart the keenest whistling of the storm-blast, claiming attention by its shrill appeal of human agony. I made my way in the direction of the yell, but could perceive nothing in the dense obscurity which then shrouded every object. Suddenly, a vivid flash of lightning revealed to me the figure of Stevens, standing alone, trembling from head to foot, his face and lips of a livid pallor that glared a ghastly spot of white in the dark space around, while his eyes seemed starting from their sockets as they remained fixed on the foaming waters, boiling and surging beyond the ship's stern.

“ Here his gaze seemed to be riveted, without any power of his to withdraw it; for, after having accosted him, asking whether he had called, if he had heard aught, or wanted help, a second flash again gave him to my view in precisely the same attitude, while he answered shortly that he had heard nothing, wanted nothing, and bade me roughly begone and not stand there watching him, waving me back with his arm, at the same time that his head and eyes maintained the same position, and remained unswervingly

fixed in the exact direction I had first beheld them. I shrunk back, appalled, for the man looked like one spell-bound, and under the influence of some terror stronger than any arising from the storm and its perils. The whole of that dreadful night I kept fearful watch, alternately contemplating the tempest and musing on the strange trance of terror in which I had found Stevens. As morning dawned the tempest abated, and the captain, with some negligent commendation of my exertions and active conduct during the past night, dismissed me to my hammock, where I slept some hours profoundly. When I awoke, and rose to my usual avocations, I was surprised to see Titta nowhere about, neither below, nor on deck, nor among the shrouds, nor, in short, in any part of the ship. I asked one of the men (who was somewhat less brutal than the rest), where the boy was, and he answered that he feared he had been swept overboard in the storm during the night, for that none of them had seen anything of him since the previous evening. 'Poor lad!' added the fellow with the remorse which too often seizes obtuse people only when too late, 'I am sorry now I ever jeered him, and made game of his being a Talian—for he couldn't help that, you know! I wish I hadn't teased him, now that he's drowned, poor lad!'

"That night, it so happened, that it was this same man's turn to keep the mid-watch; and, as he was ill, and I felt pleased with his expression of regret for poor Titta, I offered to serve the watch in his stead.

“The weather was now clear and calm over head, though the sea still rolled with the heavy swell which always continues some time, after the turbulent commotion of a storm; and, as I gazed into the dark-blue canopy of heaven, I offered heartfelt devotion and thanksgiving for my preservation through the late tempest.

“As my thoughts thus ascended skyward, they were recalled abruptly by a singular hissing noise that sounded directly astern. I crept softly towards the spot, and there beheld Stevens in the same rigid attitude of terror as I had seen him last night about the same hour. His eyes were still fixed with a stricken stare upon the tumbling billows that rolled in the wake of our ship; and his colourless cheeks and quivering bloodless lips still shaped the hideous patch of white in the centre of sombre midnight. My quiet approach, and my being screened from his view, by standing somewhat apart, caused my presence to be unperceived by him; and I could not help remaining rooted to the spot in a sort of fascination of horror, to observe this spell-bound man. There was a sort of faint singular gleam that seemed to proceed from the spot upon which his gaze was riveted, and which shed a dim reflection upon the brow of the figure before me, so that I was able to see him distinctly. I could perceive that his convulsed lips were flecked with foam, and that they could not repress his agitated breathings, which exhaled in a series of lingering, gasping, hissing utterances, which seemed as if they were impelled forth by a power not his own, and occa-

sionally seemed almost to form themselves into incoherent and involuntary words. 'Thy sister! So, Titta, so!' were the first intelligible sounds I distinguished; then followed, 'that blackened throat witnesses against me!' while the muttered sentences hissed forth in the articulation of the rattle-snake. His hands clenched, his eyes strained eagerly, his form writhing and dilating, as 'So, Titta, so!' again hissed from his frothed lips, and he looked more like a serpent than a human being. I recoiled in horror; but the next moment I perceived his limbs relax, his staring eyes close, his lips become mute; and as the singular gleam, for it could scarcely be called light, faded into darkness, I beheld him stagger along the deck, retreat towards his own cabin, and I saw him no more that night.

"The horror of this scene, and the circumstances of its repetition, haunted me fearfully through that night and the next day; and I resolved to change watches with the man who had the coming midnight one, in order that I might have an opportunity of observing Stevens again. A frightful surmise that had crossed my mind when I first heard of poor Titta's disappearance, had recurred more forcibly since, and was now gaining the strength of conviction. As the mid-watch came on, I perceived that Stevens was on deck also, walking about in a constrained manner, and as if acting under involuntary impulse. I purposely kept my station not far from the stern of the vessel, and this circumstance seemed to annoy and perplex him not a little. He seemed to be afraid of express-

ing openly his desire that I should avoid that vicinity, but he spared no efforts to draw me away by stratagem more towards the bow of the ship. As the time crept on, he grew evidently more and more uneasy, and even condescended to assume a familiar and almost friendly tone of conversation, in the hope of diverting my attention, and withdrawing me from the fatal spot. At length he feigned to remember something that wanted attending to, or doing, at the head of the ship, and despatched me to look to it immediately. I went forward, but came back in a few seconds, as I knew that it must be just upon midnight. I shall never forget the black scowl with which he saw me return to his side again. I beheld it by the reflection of the faint gleam astern, which shone forth just as he seemed about to make some angry exclamation; when, instead of uttering it, his figure became suddenly struck into rigidity, and assumed the attitude of intense horror, in which I had seen it twice previously. His foaming lips again hissed forth their terrible sounds—his eyeballs once more started from their sockets in that riveted gaze; but though he was powerless to avert his looks, he seemed to be conscious of my presence, and waved his arms in furious token to me to be gone. But I was determined to abide by my purpose, and I nerved myself to watch steadily, through the whole time that this strange spell should endure. It held the stricken wretch for about the space of a quarter of an hour, during which period I saw and heard enough to convince me that I had done him no injustice in believing him to be

the murderer of poor Titta ; but when the trance ceased, and his limbs relaxed, and he was able to control his strained vision, the first use he made of his restored powers was to spring upon me, with mingled reproaches and threats. I shook off the reptile, for I was stronger as well as younger than he, and the baffled miscreant shrunk away, muttering curses, and vows of vengeance.

“The next morning, as I was casting about in my mind how best to state my accusation of the murderer to my captain, I was summoned to his presence to attend a charge of murder which was alleged against myself. I learned that Stevens had been beforehand with me ; finding that I had discovered his foul secret, and that I should probably not be long in revealing it, and publicly accusing him of the fatal deed, he determined to have the advantage of precedence, and throw discredit on the tale I should relate of him, by previously staining my own reputation.

“I found that he had ingeniously contrived to throw suspicion on the circumstance of a body having been found in the grave opened for the reception of my little Felix’s remains. He declared that he believed the buried female who was discovered there to have been the victim of my cruelty, and to have fallen by my hand ; and such was the vehemence with which he declared that since this conviction had struck him, nothing should prevail upon him to consort further with a murderer, and that therefore he demanded my immediate imprisonment, until I could be tried at the first civilized country we arrived at, that it was not very

long before he succeeded in bringing many of the crew round to his opinion, and several loudly declared that for their parts they did not like consorting with a murderer either.

“The captain, in his weak inconclusive way, now declared that it was really very shocking, and that he positively could not tell what to think.

“‘What is very shocking?’ asked I indignantly; ‘nothing has been proved against me yet. Is it very likely that if I had murdered a woman, I should lead strangers to her very grave, and bid them dig it open?’

“Stevens here reminded them that I was in such a state of grief at the time when I lost my little Felix, that I probably had not reflected on the consequences of anything I then did. This allusion to my winged darling, together with the consciousness that it was to this very wretch himself that I owed his destruction, joined to the abhorrence I felt for his recent deeds and present treachery, inspired me with such rage and loathing, that I hastily retorted his charge, and accused him of having murdered the cabin-boy, Titta. An accusation thus rashly and abruptly made, of course brought with it rather the appearance of retaliation, than an honest detestation of crime; and looked more like a desire of revenge and a mean attempt to screen myself by attaching blame to another, than a simple disclosure of truth. I soon read the mischief I had done to my own cause in the countenances of those around me; and it is not the only time in my life, my dear young friends, that I

have observed how fatally a rash word, an impetuous action, or an ill-advised step, may injure a righteous cause. It is well, therefore, in emergencies of vital importance, to keep strict watch upon the temper, and hold the judgment cool and prepared.

“Had I acted with more moderation and wisdom on the present occasion, it might have been better for me; as it was, I found the men had not only made up their mind that my accusation of Stevens was a mere false subterfuge, but that they were making a half jesting proposal to the captain that the question of my guilt or innocence should be decided by throws of the dice, as it was impossible now to return to the shore we had so long quitted, to collect proofs of the murder with which I stood charged.

“‘Certainly not, it is out of the question to retrace our way,” said the captain, ‘that would be sad loss of time indeed;’ and with those words he dismissed the reconsideration of the cause until another day, as he declared himself quite tired and worn to death with so much talking.

“I found myself now, however, an object of marked avoidance and detestation to my shipmates; and the proposal which had originated jestingly, was soon resumed and debated in earnest. There was a sort of novelty and excitement in the idea, which possessed a certain charm for their betting souls; and, unable to withstand the temptation of a game, where the stake involved a fellow-creature’s freedom or condemnation, nay, his very existence, they were not long in coming to a decision, and, as it was now near

noon, they made preparation for throwing the dice at midday.

“I vainly entreated them to wait till night, when they should have an opportunity of beholding confirmation of my words ; but they jeeringly replied they would decide my fate first, and they would attend to the matter of Stevens’s alleged misdeeds afterwards. I glanced towards the mate as I uttered this allusion to the appalling vision in which his remorse held him nightly spell-bound ; but he stood with his arms folded and his head bent, silently watching the arrangements the men were making for casting the dice ; and it was only by a slight shudder, and a paling of the lip, that I discovered he had noticed what I said. It was a horrible mockery that was enacted in the full blaze of that noontide sun ! The men stood round the board on which the dice were successively cast, their countenances agitated by bad passions, and absolutely void of one feeling of compunction for the deed they were about to perpetrate, or for the victim who was its object. I gazed vacantly on the scene, unable to gather the results of their play, for I knew not so much as what throws, or combinations of throws, had been agreed upon to decide my fate ; when, just as a loud brutal huzza from the men, and a glance of malignant triumph from the white face of Stevens, had informed me of my doom, a tremendous shock was felt on board, so violent as to cast most of the crew prostrate, and a few minutes more sufficed to shew that the ship had struck upon a rock and was going to pieces.

“But,” said Kit, interrupting himself, “it is time to leave off; so good night, and good-bye!”

“Good-bye, dear Kit,” echoed both his young listeners with the deep-drawn sigh which shewed they had been unconsciously holding their breath in profound attention; “good-night and good-bye!”

CHAPTER V.

THE SEQUEL OF THE WRECK.—UBERTO AND BIONDELLO ; THE LITTLE BARBER ; KING IMBECÍLIO, PRINCESS EUDORA, AND LORD IGNORIO ; BARON FEROCIO, AND THE LADY ELLENA.

“WELL, Kit, what happened when the ship struck upon the rock and went to pieces?” asked Dick, the next evening.

“And how did you escape from the wreck?” added his sister.

“Immediately the nature of the disaster was ascertained,” replied Kit, “for the crew had been so deeply engaged in their wicked pursuit that they had not kept a strict look-out enough to be aware of the rocks that lay a-head, and on which our ship struck with such fatal force, all hands were in requisition to provide for their safety ; but, with the usual brutal selfishness which uniformly characterizes an inveterate gamester, they one and all devoted their efforts solely to securing their own individual rescue, losing sight of the general good, and forgetful that, in neglecting the salvation of the whole, they might probably involve their own risk of ultimate peril and loss.

“And thus it proved ; for, being at some distance from land, and the ship splitting and sinking more

rapidly than could have been believed, they all endeavoured to seize the boats, and, crowding into them rashly as fast as they could, many were drowned in the very outset, and boat after boat were sunk and lost, with the weight of the numbers that overloaded them. The last that survived was the long-boat; but as I swam rapidly towards it, in the hope of being taken up, I beheld the white face of Stevens glaring upon me, as he leaned forward, and hit me a smart blow on the hand (which I had placed on the side of the boat) with a cutlass; and I had hardly darted back with the pain of the wound, and a bitter feeling of despair, when I beheld the boat drawn towards the fast-sinking ship; and I had scarcely time to exert my utmost strength to swim beyond the whelming circle, when I beheld both ship and boat sucked into the dreadful vortex, and plunged beneath the abyss of waters.

“I struggled hard for my deliverance, and toiled with all my might to gain the land, which seemed to elude all my efforts to reach it, and to recede in proportion as I advanced. Spent and exhausted, I did just contrive to make my way as far as the shallow water, through which I crawled wadingly, and then sunk down on the sands at the very brink, insensible.

“The first thing of which I felt conscious, on returning to life, was being drawn from my perilous situation, and placed gently on the higher and drier part of the sand; and then of a sweet voice, which said, ‘Oh no, dear Uberto, he is not dead, he must not die; raise his head a little on to your knee; there—see, he opens his eyes!’

“I looked towards the gentle speaker, and saw a youth bending over me with soft kind eyes, in which I read anxiety for my recovery, and tender goodness of nature mingled with bright intelligence.

“‘His hand is badly wounded,’ said the person who was supporting my head, as he raised the right wrist carefully to examine the cut cruelly inflicted by Stevens, but which was in fact the means of my preservation. I perceived that the last person who spoke was a somewhat elder, taller, and more robust youth than the one I had first beheld; but while I gazed, his features swam indistinctly before me, I felt faint, and closed my eyes again.

“I was not perfectly insensible, though, for I heard the sweet voice of the first youth utter a sorrowing exclamation; and then I heard the other reply, ‘I will lift him into the shadow of those bushes, out of the sun; and if you will stay and watch by the poor fellow, Biondello, I will run home for a cordial for him, which I hope will give him strength enough, with my assistance, to reach the cottage.’

“‘Do so, dear Uberto,’ answered the soft voice, ‘and I will take care of him meanwhile.’

“The elder youth having effected his purpose of placing me in the shade, ran off at a quick pace, and left me alone with the one whom he had called Biondello, and who immediately set about binding my wounded hand with his handkerchief, which he tore into strips for the purpose, and applied with a lightness and delicacy of touch that a surgeon might have envied. The relief from pain which this dressing afforded me, and

the refreshment of the cool shady nook, caused me to revive; and it was not long before I was able to sit up and tender my acknowledgments to my young protector, for his share in my rescue from the waves, and for the relief his gentle care had since afforded me.

“He received my thanks with modest grace, and yet with a noble air that well became his beautiful features and high-bred appearance; his look and carriage were equally gracious and dignified, and I noticed that he wore a velvet riding-suit, rich, though of a dark sober hue, and simple fashion.

“Presently, there was the sound of approaching footsteps, and the voices of people in apparent quest of some one. Biondello started up, and, after listening for an instant, he said rapidly to himself,—‘They seek me, they must not find him, or meet Uberto;’ then hurriedly addressing me, the youth added,—‘Stranger, you will remain here; Uberto will soon return, and lead you where you can have shelter and refreshment. Farewell!—we may meet again; but, meanwhile, silence and discretion!’

“He placed his finger on his lips with a sweet, serious expression, and, waving his hand in graceful adieu, he glided away to meet those who approached, and seemed to lead them back the way they came; for I soon heard the receding steps of the whole party, while I merely caught the words, ‘Alone! unattended! wandering by the sea-shore! these solitary rambles cause me great uneasiness, lest your highness should meet with any—.’ Here the voice died away, and I heard no more until I was roused by Uberto, who

hurried towards me with the cordial, raised me from the reclining posture into which I had again sunk on the departure of Biondello ; and when I was sufficiently restored to be able to walk, conducted me towards his dwelling, and bade me welcome with a courtesy and good breeding that savoured of a higher station than the one indicated by his attire, which was that of a shepherd.

“After he had set food before me, and congratulated me on my escape, waiving the thanks I earnestly proffered, with a hearty good-humoured warmth of manner, and a frank assurance that he had only aided his friend Biondello to save me from the waves, and draw me ashore, he begged I would lie down and rest myself for an hour or two while he went to look after his flock, which he had somewhat neglected that morning while enjoying a ramble on the sea-shore.

“He pointed to a large wooden settle that stretched across one side of the table towards the hearth ; and, opening the door of the apartment which led immediately into the porch, he quitted the cottage with a friendly nod and an easy freedom of manner that made me feel at home at once, and as if I had known him for eighteen years at least,—that is to say, all our life ; for our respective ages each appeared to comprehend little more than that period of time.

“When he left me, however, I was by no means inclined to sleep ; my frame was too well inured to hardships not to be almost restored to its usual vigour by the refreshment and aid I had already received ; and my mind was too busy revolving the circum-

stances that had recently befallen me in the new acquaintance I had made with the two youths, to permit any indulgence in slumber before night should come on.

“The afternoon sun streamed through the flaunting branches of roses and jasmine that embowered the cottage casement, and shewed me the room that I was in, to be no more like the abode of a simple shepherd, than the bearing of the youth himself assorted with the lowly calling which his dress bespoke. The apartment, though humble in the extreme, looked far more like the closet of a student than the interior of a shepherd’s hut; for around the walls on all sides were shelves closely packed with books, books, and books of all shapes and dimensions, from the thin tall folio to the compact duodecimo; from the portly quarto to the medium octavo; they were ranged in various groups from the historic magnificence of twelve, the biographic importance of four, the romantic interest of three, down to the precious single volume, with its quaint lore and condensation of wisdom compressed into its few odd pages. But through all this profuse company of books, there was not one fine coat among them; their bindings were all homely, even unto shabbiness,—though they looked worn with loving use, and not injured by slovenry or neglect. Besides the one on which my repast had been served, there was another table, spread high and wide with more books, and which also bore materials for writing. Even on the settle beside me were strewed one or two books,

which, on examination, I knew enough to be aware were Greek and Latin classic poets.

“In my eagerness to learn more of this shepherd-philosopher, I rose, and strolling through the cottage porch, all fragrant with the flowery bloom that distilled its sweets, as it crept around door and window in rich profusion, I issued forth into the open air, and made my way across some meadows, in the direction I had seen taken by my host when seeking his flock. I found myself in a lovely, peaceful valley, undisturbed by sight or sound but those of Nature in her serenest aspect of beauty; and, directed by the tinkle of a distant sheep-bell, I wandered on till I came to a grassy plain on the slope of a hill, where lay scattered the fleecy treasure of my host, cropping their evening meal beneath his watchful care; for he sat at a little distance under a shady tree enjoying a book, while his sheep enjoyed their meal, and his lambs their frisking, sportive game of play.

“He rose to meet me when he observed my approach, and, closing his book, said he was glad to find I was sufficiently recovered to be able to take so long a walk. I replied by telling him of my admiration of his cottage-study, and of my longing to know more of its master.

“He smiled, and said, my surprise at finding so many books in the possession of a poor scholar would cease when he informed me that they had been the gift of his uncle Erudito, of whose vast library they formed but a slight portion. That his venerable

relation had spent one period of his life in that cottage, during which he had taken great pleasure in forming the mind of Uberto and of infusing into his nephew's spirit the same earnest love of knowledge that inspired his own,—he himself being one of the most celebrated scholars in the country. That he had for the last three years gone to reside at a lone and romantic house he possessed among the mountains inland, where he could pursue his favorite study—that of the stars; giving the books and the cottage to Uberto as his parting token of love and fatherly regard. 'The flock, my sole parental inheritance, supplies all my wants,' said Uberto, in conclusion, 'and as long as I can enjoy my peaceful shepherd-life out-of-doors, and my treasury of books in-doors, my utmost desires of wealth are fulfilled.'

"Then collecting his flock, and wending homewards, he spoke of Biondello, and asked me how it was that he had left me, before he himself could return. I told him, how Biondello had been sought by some people whom I had not seen, and I was about to add what I had overheard, when Biondello's last words, 'meanwhile, silence, and discretion!' echoed in my ears their soft tones, and I checked myself.

"Uberto, however, replied :—'I hardly wonder at his having quitted you abruptly. Though I have known Biondello myself a long time, and in some respects intimately, yet there has always been something about him that I could not precisely fathom—a sort of mystery connected with him that I could not discover; but, indeed, I have never greatly cared, or

much sought to know what this mystery might be, but have contented myself with enjoying the pleasure of his society on his own terms, without seeking to inquire into what he evidently withholds. Any allusion to his birth or station, or what he is at all beyond the engaging youth I know and see, appears to distress and vex him ; and I care not to trouble our calm and pleasant intercourse by any unseasonable questions. It is now more than two years since I first beheld him, and the action in which I found him engaged, led me to love him as soon as I saw him. Our friendship begun from that moment, and has continued ever since.'

“‘What were the circumstances under which you first beheld him?’ asked I, ‘if I may indulge more curiosity than you have permitted yourself to exercise with regard to this interesting Biondello,’ I added with a smile.

“‘There is a small brook, crossed by a plank and handrail, close to our cottage,’ replied Uberto. ‘One morning, on approaching this spot, I beheld a youth leading carefully my poor blind Martha (the old woman who keeps my humble home in order for me), who it seems had missed her footing in crossing the frail bridge I mentioned, had fallen into the brook, and had been rescued thence by the youthful stranger, who was now soothing her with his gentle voice, and tenderly supporting her homewards. The youth (who you will guess was no other than Biondello) continued to press her to lean upon him, though his slight figure seemed to afford but a slender hope of

much strength, and utterly regardless of his rich hunting-suit, which might be soiled in the muddy contact of the old woman's dripping clothes. This humanity, and freedom from selfish fastidiousness (too rare among the class to which his dress bespoke him to belong) prepossessed me at once in his favour. I addressed him with thanks for his care of my poor old dame, relieved him from her burden, and we proceeded towards my cottage together; for I then learned that he had originally been coming thither, when he met with the adventure of the blind woman. He told me that he had a great thirst for knowledge, with little or no means of acquiring any; that his mother had early inspired him with a veneration for learning, and had bid him seek it with unswerving diligence, when she should be no more; that she had often spoken to him of the profound wisdom and philosophic lore of my venerable uncle Erudito, and had desired him to spare no entreaties to obtain his friendship, and secure his instruction; that accordingly, since the death of his mother, he had never ceased desiring to carry out her wishes; and that now, when he had somewhat recovered the shock of his bereavement, he had hastened hither in obedience to her solemn injunctions.

“He appeared struck with dismay when I informed him of the departure of my uncle. He gazed mournfully round upon the books, as if deploring this sudden bar to his hope of becoming acquainted with their contents, and he looked so touching in his innocent sadness, as he sat with clasped hands and tearful eyes,

that I bade him take courage, and said, that if he liked, I would help him in his difficulty.

“‘You?’ said he with his sweet voice—for you may have noticed that Biondello has a remarkably sweet voice—as he looked up in my face with blushing eagerness and renewed hope.

“‘I will: I shall not make you so good a master to be sure, as my clever uncle; but he has kindly taught me a good deal, and, if you like, I will teach it to you again; and we can, at any rate, go on until you know as much as I do. Thus then our acquaintance began, and thus was our friendship established as master and pupil,’ continued Uberto; ‘Biondello comes to my cottage as often as he pleases for his lessons, which most frequently take place in the little study; but occasionally we carry our books into the open air, sometimes sitting under a tree in the vicinity of the flock, and sometimes wandering along the sea-shore, as we fortunately did this morning, when we discovered you on the sands. But though I cannot help fancying, from Biondello’s manners, appearance, and dress (for the dark hunting-dress he invariably wears, seems to be costly though simple), that he is of high rank and birth, yet he always comes alone and unattended, as if he dreaded observation; and I have noticed, that after our lessons, when I offer to walk with him part of the way on his road home, he never permits me to accompany him beyond a certain point; but always insists on my returning, when we have reached the furthest verge of the little wood which lies between this valley and the city, where I imagine

is his abode. I know little of the great city, seldom having occasion to quit this peaceful valley, which contains all I desire upon earth; and less of the court, which holds its state there; for even if my inclination led me to seek its glittering wonders, my humble station would preclude any hope of gaining admission to behold them. But sometimes I have imagined that my friend Biondello is no other than the heir of Lord Ignorio, the prime minister, who I have heard has a son of that name; and from all I have ever heard of the father, he is the very man to render it necessary for a child of his to seek knowledge (if he have any thirst for it), with secrecy and mystery. However, if such be the enigma of my friend's incognito, I do not care to master its solution, while it is his whim to preserve it intact.'

"We had by this time reached the cottage, and evening closing in, after a frugal but pleasant meal, rendered doubly so by my host's conversation and hearty manners, he shewed me to the room formerly occupied by his uncle as a bed-chamber, and left me to enjoy a sound night's rest, which I did, undisturbed by one of the many reflections and cogitations that had doubtless frequently employed the brain of its former learned occupant. Next morning, Uberto playfully remarking that his solitary humour ought to be no guide for me, a stranger, who would doubtless like to see some of the lions of the neighbouring metropolis, strongly advised my paying a visit to the great city beyond the wood; telling me I might bring home an account of all the wonders I had seen, to

amuse him after his morning ramble with his sheep. Accordingly, soon after breakfast, I set forth, and entered the city long before mid-day. I found it like most other large cities I have ever seen; with grand streets and grand shops; plenty of wealth and plenty of squalor; large lofty houses, and poor lowly dwellings; luxurious carriages mingling with heavy-laden carts; and easy opulence everywhere neighboured by bustling commerce, labouring poverty, or needy beggary.

“I stopped for a moment to look into a jeweller’s shop, my eye being caught by the dazzling heaps displayed in the window; and then I passed on to the next, a bookseller’s, thinking, at the moment, that if I had money, how much more welcome a present I could carry home to Uberto from the second shop than the first; when a little dapper man, a barber, who had been observing me, stepped across the street, and pointing back to his shop on the other side of the way, asked me if I would not like to be shaved.

“I put my hand to my smooth chin, which, it must be owned, advanced but small claims as yet to his services, and looked him smilingly in the face, shaking my head expressively as a sufficient answer. But, no-wise abashed, he smirked, and bowed, and said:—

“‘But your hair, sir; perhaps you would like to have it cut? its luxuriant growth would be improved by a little trimming; I venture to think, and may, perhaps, suggest—’

“While he was obsequiously uttering this speech, it occurred to me that a rest in his barber’s chair would not be unwelcome to me after my sauntering

walk through the town, and that I might possibly pick up some amusing intelligence the while from this polite little man, whose calling proverbially included that of a newsmonger.

“I accordingly suffered him to lead me across the way to his shop; and he had no sooner commenced operations on my head, than I began to question him a little concerning the current talk of the town, the state of politics there, the court gossip, and whether he knew anything of the Lord Ignorio.

“‘His right honourable lordship, the prime minister? To be sure I do,’ replied the little man, consequentially; ‘his lordship is my excellent good friend and constant patron. I have not only his own right honourable beard under my hands every morning, but I have the honour of dressing his daughter, the Lady Ellena’s lovely curls, and his son, Count Biondello’s hair; with the prospect of the future culture of the latter’s moustachios and whiskers, when heaven shall, in its own good time, invest the youth with these insignia of manhood. Indeed it is not from any want of zeal on the part of my right honourable patron, Lord Ignorio, that I have not the beard and hair of majesty itself under my jurisdiction; but the fact is,—and here the little barber dropped his voice to a confidential whisper,—‘the fact is, there is much, very much, my dear sir, to be understood in these matters that does not appear on the surface; wheel within wheel, my dear sir,—counteracting interests,—cabals and intrigues without end,—considerations of policy, prudence, expe-

diency, and I know not what,—prevent skill and peculiar fitness from receiving their due weight in court appointments. I name no names,' added the little barber, almost breathless with the importance of his communication, and the mystery attached to it. 'But this I will say, that, considering the high influence which Lord Ignorio doubtless possesses with the most illustrious personage in this kingdom, it *must* be some of the motives I have just alluded to, which caused a certain person's appointment to the post of court barber instead of your humble servant.'

" 'Then Lord Ignorio's influence with his Majesty is very great?' asked I, as soon as I could edge a word into the midst of my barber's stream of talk.

" 'His right honourable lordship's power near the throne is undoubted and enormous,' replied the little man; 'so undoubted and so enormous, indeed, that it does not fail to raise the jealousy and enmity of the base-minded populace, who contend that it is not well for their aged monarch to be so wholly led by a man who, they say, is well known to be an 'unlettered, ignorant, obstinate man, entertaining the greatest contempt for intellectual power, and believing the whole glory and greatness of a nation to consist in her military achievements and the extension of her dominions. These absurd slanders of my noble patron (if, indeed, I ought to call them slanders, when, for my part, I venture to think, and may perhaps suggest, that they are admirable principles for a prime minister),—but these opinions of the populace concerning my right honourable patron, have arisen

partly from the circumstance of his having betrothed his only daughter, the Lady Ellena, to the commander-in-chief and generalissimo of the forces, Baron Feroccio, and from his universally labouring to promote the military advantages of the country, to the neglect, and even prejudice, of her civil, commercial, artistic, and financial interests. Count Biondello, too, his lordship's son, seems to have inherited his father's predilections, and to be a worthy successor in his views, for, notwithstanding it is whispered that he is rather a wild youth, and given to follow his own lordly will—which I venture to think, and may perhaps suggest, are very allowable indications of his high rank and aristocratic consciousness of privilege and impunity; but, notwithstanding these rumours, I say, it is believed that he has, at present, quitted the court with the intention of going to the wars, and joining Baron Feroccio, his sister's betrothed, under whom he will probably serve a few campaigns *incog*. This sudden disappearance of Count Biondello from court, was, by some, attributed to dread of a match which, it is understood, was contemplated by our venerable monarch, King Imbecilio, who, in his partiality for his favourite minister, had thought of bestowing his only child, the Princess Eudora, on Lord Ignorio's son, Count Biondello, in marriage. Now, sir, you must know—a little oil will, I venture to think, and may perhaps suggest, be an improvement to your hair, sir. No?—oh, very well—no oil—quite simply—as you please, of course. Well, sir, as I was saying,

continued the little barber, resuming the thread of his discourse, which he had abruptly snapped with a professional solicitude about my head, 'as I was saying, you must know, that the Princess Eudora is a very peculiar person, if I may venture to think and suggest such a thing of a royal individual—very peculiar. She not only will never permit any one to touch her hair, which she always dresses and arranges herself, according to her own particular notions of grace and beauty, a thing which, I venture to think, and may perhaps suggest, is very unladylike, not to say unprincessly, savouring of plebeian independence, and low, artist-like individuality of taste, wholly unbecoming her distinguished rank and station;—not only has she this peculiarity, but she is said to have a decided abhorrence for show and proper dignity, which she calls ostentation and pride; she despises homage and observance as servility and fawning, and talks of fashionable ease and courtly polish, as frivolity and folly; she has even been heard to censure war and conquest, as wasteful burthens on the state, and is well known to prefer study to amusement. No wonder poor Count Biondello should take fright at the proposal of a union with such a woman, even though she be a princess of the royal blood, and heir apparent to the throne,—for, I venture to think, and may perhaps suggest, that a bookish, learned wife, is not formed to be a very eligible companion, or a very attractive mistress, to a gay soldier. Poor young man! and poor old man, too, if all be true that I hear,' pursued the little barber, 'for I

understand, that the poor old king, her father, is sometimes perfectly desperate about her odd ways and whimsical notions, and is ready to run distracted, at the little sense she has of what is due to her position, when she avows her sympathy with the very poorest and most abject of the people,—creatures that you would not touch with my pole, long as it is, and ragged and dirty as they are,—declaring that even their vices are more to be pitied than blamed, desiring the amelioration of their condition above all things, studying her own improvement for their sake, reading and thinking, instead of dressing and visiting, and, in short, committing a thousand eccentric absurdities, enough to break a father's heart, especially a kingly father's.'

"The little barber concluded his speech just as his officiation with my hair came to a close, so, rising from my seat and paying him, I took my leave, with many thanks for his entertaining gossip and court news. As I quitted his shop, and proceeded in the direction which I knew would lead me towards the part of the country where lay the valley and Uber-to's cottage beyond the wood, a carriage drew up to the edge of the pavement, and, stopping near to where I stood, a person stepped out and addressed me. He had on a coat covered with gold lace, carried a gold stick in his hand, and looked like a court footman. Making a low bow, he told me he was instructed to fetch me to the palace immediately, as his Majesty, King Imbecilio, desired to speak to me. I of course immediately obeyed, and was con-

veyed speedily to the very place concerning which, its doings, and some of the people who figured in its circle, I had just been hearing so much.

“I was ushered straight into the presence-chamber, where sat an aged man, on a throne, whose countenance seemed to be compounded of vacant insipidity and foolish wonder, and whose weak aspect and silly expression inspired but little respect, notwithstanding the grandeur of his position and the magnificence by which he was surrounded. On each side of the throne were ranged splendidly dressed guards, in brilliant uniforms, and around stood troops of jewelled noblemen, robed in rich velvets and silks, while snowy plumes waved from their caps, and gave animation and life to the scene. But what chiefly attracted my eyes, amid all this gorgeous array, was a figure that sat on a couch placed in close vicinity to the throne, and whom I immediately guessed to be the king’s daughter, Princess Eudora. She was attired in simplest white, but, from the slight circlet that crowned her princely brow, a lustrous veil of golden hair fell in clustering profusion over shoulders, bosom, and waist, and made her the brightest object in that bright scene.

“Her face, too, was of surpassing beauty ; the white polished temples shone with intellectual supremacy ; her eyes beamed forth mingled softness and spiritual elevation ; the roses of her mouth bloomed sensibility, and ever-fresh gentleness and gracious kindness ; intelligence and sweetness sparkled and played alternately, or blended harmoniously in every expressive

feature; and the brilliancy of her complexion, together with her radiant tresses, shed a sunshine around the spot, as if a youthful Aurora had sat there to dazzle human vision.

“I gazed entranced upon this beauteous figure, struck by some vaguely remembered impression, as well as by the present one, when my attention was recalled by the king’s addressing me, and my eyes fell again upon the foolish wondering face of the old man, whose grey hairs were the sole thing in his appearance that claimed genuine respect. I knelt to him, while he told me that having heard I was a stranger who had been cast ashore, the sole survivor from the vessel which was wrecked off that coast the previous day, he had sent for me to see what could be done to relieve the destitute condition to which I doubtless found myself reduced by this accident; and, as he was struck by my stalwart appearance, good height, and the athletic proportions of my frame (which promised great strength when I should reach maturity), he resolved to bestow upon me a post in his army, and would engage to give me the command of a troop on the first signal proof I should give of bravery and military ardour.

“His majesty paused, evidently expecting that I should be transported with this mark of his bounty; but when I had a little recovered my amazement, I ventured to state, that so far from ever expecting to distinguish myself by military ardour, or zeal for a profession of which I had ever felt a scrupulous aversion, from its involving the necessity of putting a fel-

low-creature to death, I must beg respectfully to decline his majesty's intended boon, and to relinquish any claim upon his compassion from my late accident, as I hoped speedily to be in a condition to resume my sailor life; until when, I was contented to be obliged to a generous friend for the means of present subsistence.

“King Imbecilio appeared to be about to return some angry reply, when his daughter rose from her couch, and, laying her hand gently on her parent's arm, murmuring, ‘Nay, dear father—.’ She went on to whisper something earnestly to him, while I started, struck once more by some vague remembrance suggested by those soft tones; then, turning towards me, she added—‘Go, friend! you are right, perhaps—but go now, and at once.’ She waved her hand graciously but firmly—gentleness and dignity in every look—while I, dropping for an instant to her feet, and pressing the hem of her white garment to my lips, promptly withdrew from the royal presence.

“I once again wended my steps towards the country, pondering on my visit to court, and stopped not until I reached Uberto's cottage, where I entertained my host with an account of all I had seen and heard on my visit to the great city.

“He seemed to dwell most on what I had heard from the little barber concerning Count Biondello, Lord Ignorio's son; observing, that the circumstance of the youth's disappearance confirmed what he had some time suspected; and that what mere report had represented as wildness, wilfulness, and determination

to follow his own predilection for war, might in reality be a resolute determination to pursue the path of knowledge unthwarted by his unlettered father, and so render himself worthy of his promised bride, and of hereafter reigning with her.

“‘And this promised bride, this beautiful princess herself,’ added Uberto, after a moment’s pause; ‘she must needs be a glorious creature, Kit; and of all your wonders, the only one I should care to see.’”

“The next day I wandered down to the sea-shore, that I might see if there were any trace of my unhappy shipmates, or any portion of the wreck to be discovered on the sands; but not a vestige, not a token did I find: I was apparently the only one saved from that luckless crew; and, as I returned, I failed not to render fervent thanks for my preservation.

“On entering the porch of the cottage, I heard the voice of Uberto reading aloud, and, as I lingered for an instant to look into the little study ere I crossed the threshold, I saw him seated on the oaken settle with Biondello by his side, who was looking up into his face, and drinking in every word that fell from his lips with avidity and devoted attention. The two youths made a nice picture, sitting thus; the eager pupil, with his soft eyes and rosy mobile lips, the very personification of listening, earnest, Docility; the grave master, with his high-minded look, his impressive delivery of the lofty theme, and his benign interest for the neophyte beside him, looked like the genius of Instruction. The younger lad had cast aside his dark velvet cap, and wore a sort of crimson silk net,

of Spanish fashion, which contrasted well with his fair hair and still fairer skin; the elder one in his simple rustic guise, his glowing cheek embrowned by open air and healthful exercise, and his dark chestnut locks clustering close round his noble forehead, broad and high in the expanse of intellect,—they looked two rare and exquisite specimens of youthful and manly beauty.

“After I had indulged my fancy for a few moments by contemplating them thus in silence as they sat together, I advanced from the porch, and entered the little study just as Uberto had concluded his period, and Biondello had ejaculated—‘Sublime wisdom!’ The cadence of the voice struck me, as those soft tones fell again upon my ear, and I paused involuntarily; while Biondello, raising his eyes, met mine, and read something in their expression that caused a bright crimson blush to flash into his face, then to spread, until it suffused his very throat, that lay bare beneath the open collar of his hunting vest, thrown partially back on account of the heat.

“But he also seemed to read in my face something that reassured him, for he recovered himself by the time Uberto had said—‘You were so absorbed in the old philosopher’s doctrines, Biondello, and are, moreover, so unaccustomed to any one else’s presence in this solitary study of ours, that you had forgotten I have a guest in the stranger whom I helped you to rescue from the waves the other morning.’

“So saying, he introduced us to each other with his usual ease and courteous freedom of manner, and

the lesson proceeded, while I took up a curious old volume full of quaint illuminations and strange pictures, that I might relieve the students from my observation, while I pursued my own train of thought, and the reverie into which I had fallen. Ever and anon I glanced furtively at the younger one, as his low soft tones reached my ear when replying to some question or remark of his instructor, and each time I gathered fresh confirmation of my surmise. 'The close net of crimson silk does well,' I thought; 'it is a good device for concealing that lustrous wealth of tresses, but, having once beheld their full radiance, I can divine them beneath their silken screen.'

"The lesson finished, we all three went forth together, and sauntered through the valley towards the little wood, beyond which lay the city. As we approached the trees, we saw a little stray lamb wandering by itself, and Uberto, willing to restore it to the flock, retraced his steps, bidding me accompany Biondello through the wood, as far on his way home as he chose to have an escort.

"Thus left alone together, I could see the bright flush once more suffuse Biondello's cheek and throat; but I cast my eyes gravely on the ground with as much unconsciousness as I could assume, determined that I would be guided entirely by what I should discover to be the wishes of my companion.

"I was not long kept in suspense, however. After a few moments' bashful irresolution, the graceful being beside me, stopped, and with dignified candour said—'I perceive you have penetrated my secret,

Kit,—you have discovered who I really am ; but I perceive also that you have respected my mystery, and have repaid the service I rendered you in saving your life, by strictly observing the injunction I gave you of ‘silence and discretion.’ Could you but know how difficult has been my path hitherto—how beset with obstacles and impediments I have been through life in my endeavour to fulfil my duty honestly and conscientiously, you would not wonder at my having recourse to this disguise to obtain what I could not otherwise achieve. Ignorance, prejudice, and parental authority injudiciously exercised, hemmed me in, and prevented my attaining what my soul thirsted for—knowledge and wisdom ; but, feeling that on my freedom from the thralldom of narrow-minded views, depended not only my own enlightenment, but in that enlightenment the future welfare of thousands, I resolved to brave all risks and devote myself to study, reflection, and intellectual acquirement in the humble guise of an unknown youth ; this secluded valley, the abode of the scholarly Erudito and his nephew, apart from courtly trammels and screened from impertinent interference, has been the happy scene of my education, and I trust to your good faith, Kit, in preserving my secret scrupulously, for the continuance of my scheme, and for the security of the results with which I hope to see it ultimately crowned. Remember, to you and Uberto I am Biondello still. From him, particularly, guard my secret carefully. Once more then—‘farewell ; and, silence and discretion !’

“A moment more, and I was left quite alone beneath the trees; and, ruminating on what I had just heard, I returned slowly to the cottage.

“Next day, I hoped in vain to see Biondello again; all the morning I could scarcely attend to the book which Uberto was reading aloud to me, as we sat together beneath our favourite tree, for thinking of Biondello and looking for his arrival. The subject of the volume was interesting to me,—it was a book of voyages and travels,—but my attention perpetually wandered, and at length Uberto perceived it, and said—‘I don’t wonder at your being interested in Biondello, and longing to see more of him. He is certainly the most fascinating of human beings, and I myself am conscious of feeling that my old liking and affection for my gentle pupil has of late deepened and strengthened into an attachment that is becoming a part of my very existence. His presence is a joy and delight to me; his absence saddens and depresses me. I am haunted, when he is away, by the musical echo of his soft tones, and his gentle smile plays ever fitfully before me, making me pine to bask in its kindly warmth again, as if it were a vital principle. I reason with myself, and endeavour to wean myself from the fascination which this youth’s society possesses for me; for if, as I suspect, he is indeed Lord Ignorio’s son, how should I hope to retain for ever the companionship of one so high-born, and so remote in position from myself? Count Biondello, the mature nobleman, will forget his humble shepherd-master; and the instructor of the

gentle lad, Biondello, will long in vain to see his old pupil.'

"Uberto paused with a deep sigh and a troubled look, very different from the usual calm expression of his thoughtful, though frank and open countenance. But his brow cleared as I said energetically—'Do not think it,—Biondello will never forget the friend of his youth : his nature is too noble.'

"Uberto grasped my hand with cordial warmth, as he replied :—

" ' True ; you do him better justice than I do in the selfishness of my exacting attachment.'

"He turned, as he spoke, to go homewards ; and I saw that he too partook of my anxiety for the arrival of Biondello. Afternoon came, however, but still the youth did not appear ; and I heard Uberto repeat his deep sigh as he put away the books on the shelves, which he had spread on the study-table that morning, in the hope of his beloved pupil's advent—a hope that he now evidently relinquished, though with reluctance.

"Restless and uneasy, he then proposed our walking forth again into the open air ; and we naturally enough took the direction of the little wood. Our thoughts being pre-occupied, we as naturally walked on in silence ; but the exclamation which burst from us both at the same moment, shewed plainly the subject which had employed them severally and alike.

" ' There he is ! ' we suddenly ejaculated, as Biondello emerged from the wood, and hurried towards us.

"His manner and appearance filled us with alarm.

His dress was disordered, and his face was pale and agitated; he trembled violently, and looked back every now and then in the direction whence he came, as if he dreaded pursuit.

“ ‘What is the matter, Biondello?’ asked Uberto, forcing himself to be calm, that he might the better soothe his young friend’s agitation.—‘What has happened?—What has alarmed you?’

“ ‘There has been a frightful scene there,’ gasped the youth, pointing in the direction of the city; ‘a popular tumult; the people have risen in defence of their rights; they have proclaimed their abhorrence of the late government—denounced the prime minister as their chief enemy; attacked his house; required him to surrender himself to their custody; and are preparing to dictate terms to the king.’

“Biondello appeared to be about to add something more, as he looked appealingly into his friend’s face; but at that moment he seemed to hear a noise in the wood that sounded to him like approaching pursuit; for, gasping faintly, and pointing in the direction of his fears, his limbs failed him, and he would have sunk to the ground had not Uberto caught him in his arms and supported him from falling.

“ ‘He has swooned; help me to bear him to the cottage, Kit; and we will get old Martha to help us to revive him,’ said Uberto, with the same determinately calm manner, as if he resolved not to let his anxiety master his power of being useful to his friend.

“We bore Biondello into the little study, and

placed him on the oaken settle; but in so doing, by some accident the crimson silk net became detached, and fell upon the floor. With it fell the bright gold tresses; they poured forth in their luxuriant abundance, like the sun's rays streaming in at the lattice of a morning chamber; and the beautiful woman lay revealed beyond all power of disguise.

"I raised my eyes to Uberto's countenance to see the effect of this sudden discovery upon him. It was electrical; all traces of his forced calmness had vanished, and his features worked with uncontrollable emotions of surprise and agitation; his lips were parted, and quivered sharply; his nostrils dilated, and his face was pale—then flushed abruptly; his eyes were fixed in passionate sadness upon the lovely prostrate figure before him; but I noticed that his appearance betokened, not so much sympathy and alarm for his young friend, as some powerful inward struggle of his own with which he was contending. His emotion was so evident, and shook him so strongly, that I involuntarily exclaimed,

"'Uberto!'

"He started; then, muttering something of seeking old Martha's aid, he abruptly lifted one of the golden ringlets to his lips, with reverent fervour, for one instant, and sped from the room. The old blind woman soon after came to my assistance, and, with some cordial restorative and a glass of fair water, we tried every means to restore our sweet patient.

"The fainting-fit was obstinate, however; pre-

vious anxiety and alarm, together with the fatigue of the long, hurried walk, had thrown her into a deep swoon, and it was long before it yielded to our joint efforts. At length tokens of returning consciousness manifested themselves; her eyes opened, and languidly sought those of her friend, her instructor, but perceiving no Uberto, she closed them faintly, and leaned against poor blind Martha, who knelt beside her, and uttered soothing words to the gentle young creature who had once supported her feeble steps. The kindly heart that had never repressed its natural tenderness, or refused its sympathy towards the suffering poor, because they happened to be of inferior station, now drew comfort from this aged crone in return, and placing her arms round the old woman's neck, she suffered the tears to flow from her closed lids, and laid her young cheek against Martha's withered one, in simple womanly claim of loving consolation. It was the true spark of Nature asserting itself, and proclaiming equal kindred between prince and peasant, in the moment of mutual sorrow and kindness.

"I left them together, and withdrew to seek Uberto, somewhat surprised at his absence during his guest's recovery, and not a little anxious concerning himself, when I recalled the state of struggle and agitation in which he had abruptly quitted the little study. But I could find him nowhere; I had soon been through the rooms in the cottage, and was preparing to set forth and search the valley in all his wonted places, when, on the table in my

chamber I perceived a paper, addressed to myself. I snatched it up, and read as follows:—

“The struggle is over. I should be unworthy of the wise teaching of my venerable instructor, and more than father, did I not endeavour to prove myself able to choose integrity and honour, when opposed to selfish inclination. I could not see her, and refrain from uttering the new wild passion which has suddenly sprung from my old fond affection for my beloved pupil. I now read the enigma; she has taken her brother’s name, that she might gain the education of a man. To you, Kit, I leave the charge of protecting and serving this noble creature, since so dear a privilege is denied to me by a fatal obstacle. Shield her carefully from all harm, and conceal her from all eyes, in my humble cottage, as long as she may deem concealment necessary. Should she inquire for her hapless friend, tell her that he is gone on an indispensable mission to old Erudito’s house; she need never know the motive which really banishes me thither, and imperatively bids me quit Biondello for ever! Once more let me call her by that cherished name. Farewell, Biondello! Farewell, kind friend Kit!

“‘UBERTO.’

“As I gazed upon the paper and debated with myself for a moment or two, whether I would preserve his secret or shew the letter at once, to account for his absence, it struck me forcibly that mystery is

always a bad thing, and to be avoided, if possible, and that, moreover, in the present case, it had already been productive of misunderstanding and suffering; so I quickly resolved that I would have no reserves, but at once give Biondello the power of judging fully what was now best to be done. As I revolved these thoughts, I reflected that I must no longer use the old familiar name of Biondello, but at once recognize the Princess Eudora, by treating her with the observance due to her rank, since all disguise was now at an end.

“I entered the little study, accordingly, with all the more homage in my heart, as well as in my outward bearing, for seeing her simply seated there, on the old oaken settle, in the dark hunting-suit, with blind Martha, the object of her former kind help, as her sole attendant, instead of occupying a throne, crowned and robed, with a dazzling retinue around her. Dependent, thus, on me alone for help and protection, she inspired me with more respect and honouring admiration than when I had beheld her the brilliant centre of that gorgeous presence-chamber. I approached then, deferentially, kneeling on one knee, but she smiled and raised me, observing, that a wandering princess should hold no state. She thanked me with earnestness for having been so true a knight to her, in guarding her secret with so much discretion, and then, with a playfulness which shewed that her spirits had revived with her recovery, yet with a blush that became her well, she added,—

“But where is my other true knight and still older

friend, my dear master, Uberto? why is he not here to receive the thanks of his pupil, and to aid his new friend in her difficulties?

“For all answer, I placed his letter in her hands. Her cheek heightened its bloom, when she began to read, but paled as she continued.

“‘Gone, and bids Biondello farewell for ever!’ she at length, exclaimed. ‘But this—‘her brother’s name!’—‘a fatal obstacle!’—what may this mean?’ added she.

“I explained, that Uberto had always believed his mysterious pupil to be no other than Lord Ignorio’s son, Count Biondello, that he now, doubtless, concluded her to be the Lady Ellena, Count Biondello’s sister, and that the well-known circumstance of the Lady Ellena’s betrothment to Baron Feroccio was, most probably, the ‘fatal obstacle’ to which he alluded.

“‘Fatal mystery!’ exclaimed Eudora; ‘why did I not trust entirely one so virtuous and high-minded as the noble Uberto? Oh! my dear master, my kind instructor, why are you not here to save your poor Biondello.’

“The princess then told me that she had come hither that afternoon with the intention of seeking the aid of Uberto and myself, and of asking his counsel and judgment, to assist her and her father in this emergency of the popular insurrection.

“I bid her highness avail herself to the utmost of her true knight’s poor services, which, though humble, were heartily proffered; and she, with that

blended gentleness and dignity, sweetness and grace, which distinguished her, saying, that one faithful warm heart was of more value to a prince than a hundred lukewarm swords, it was agreed upon between us, that I should, on the morrow, set forth to the mansion of old Erudito, in search of Uberto, and entreat his return in her name.

“But it is very late, my young friends,” said the old mariner, breaking off; “it is nearly time you were going to bed, as the Princess Eudora did, attended by old Martha; and, though the roof was humble, and her attendant poor and blind, yet, had she not been kept awake by anxiety, it is probable that she would have enjoyed as sound sleep in the cottage, after the fatigues of the day, as she had ever done in her father’s palace.

CHAPTER VI.

KIT GOES IN SEARCH OF UBERTO.—THE MANSION OF OLD ERUDITO.—QUADRATA.—THE RETURN TO THE CITY.—KIT SETS SAIL AGAIN.—THE GRANITE ISLAND.—THE HORSE OF BRASS.—THE FEAST OF THE SATYRS.

“Now for the disguised princess!” exclaimed Fanny, as she and her brother took their usual places in Kit’s cottage, the next evening.

“Did you find Uberto at his uncle’s house, Kit?” inquired Dick.

“The next morning,” answered the old man, “just as I was setting out from the cottage, to proceed in quest of him, I beheld a large troop of horsemen enter the valley, and by the time I had returned to inform the princess of their approach, they swelled into a large train, that, with much pomp and ceremony, marshalled its way straightforwards in the rection of the cottage.

“The princess, perceiving at once that they were aware of her presence there, and were, in all probability, envoys charged with some message to her, as their peaceful procession indicated no hostile approach, she bid me inquire their will, and, if it were as she supposed, to usher the heralds into her presence at once. When I had obeyed her instructions, I found

that she had divined truly the object of their coming. Two reverend men, elders of the city, who headed the procession, dismounted from their horses, and entered the little study, where they found the princess awaiting their approach with simple, unaffected dignity. They must have been well-pleased to have found her thus, surrounded by the books from which she had reaped such fruitful harvest and collected so manifold and valuable stores of knowledge; for it proved that they came as representatives of their fellow-citizens' wishes that the Princess Eudora should assume the crown, and govern them in future by virtue of the wisdom she had acquired, and according to the dictates of her own discreet, virtuous, and gentle nature. It appeared, that her merits had gained her the hearts of the people, and that—when they had revolted against a military tyranny, and had refused longer submission to the ignorant and narrow-minded sway of Lord Ignorio, who, they felt, governed them in reality, through the medium of his influence over the weak old king, their nominal sovereign—they determined to enforce the minister's resignation, the foolish monarch's abdication, and to raise the Princess Eudora to the throne, secure of their rights beneath her mild rule and wise judgment.

“But she asked them in reply, how they thought she would prove herself wise and virtuous in accepting a throne which her parent had just been compelled to abdicate? or how she would be likely to confirm their partial opinion of her, were she to wear a

crown so lately stript from the brows of her old father? Would these acts give earnest of present merit in her, or afford promise of future happiness to them? She entreated her loving countrymen to reconsider their proposal, and to reflect upon one which she had to make to them in return. This was, that as they had banished Lord Ignorio from his station of prime minister, because they traced their chief wrongs to his injudicious counsels and his baneful influence with the king, she proposed that they should elect a new minister in the late one's stead, whose known worth and tried wisdom would ensure that his guiding aid and valuable suggestions should always be skilfully and beneficially employed in directing the king to promote the welfare of his liege subjects.

“Seeing approval and admiration of her filial conduct depicted in the countenance of the two reverend envoys, the princess proposed to return with them forthwith, and accompany them back to the city in person. On leaving the cottage, and preparing to mount the white palfrey which they had brought with them in the hope of prevailing on their chosen sovereign to return at once, the princess was received with a burst of acclamation from the numbers who formed the procession, and she was escorted back to the city in triumph. Arrived at the palace, she hastened to her old father, and, leading him from the chamber where he had been kept under a sort of guard, respectful but strict, until the ultimate decision of the princess and the people should be made

known, she led him to a window that overlooked a spacious square, which was now thronged by a vast concourse of the inhabitants; and here she addressed the people in behalf of her father, conjuring them to return to their allegiance, and not to force her to reign by an act of filial outrage, but to let her be still a faithful daughter and their loving princess. She repeated her proposal to elect a new minister, whose worthy counsels should inspire and aid their aged sovereign, and ended by proposing to them as a fit person to fill the important office of state counsellor and prime minister, the nephew of the well-known sage and philosopher, Erudito.

“When the shout of applause which rung through the multitude at the conclusion of the princess’s address ceased, and the colour which had mounted to her cheek as she spoke, subsided also, she resumed with fresh energy, as if resolved that no private emotion should interfere with the public tribute due to the excellences of her friend and master, and she went on to say with modest firmness—‘We would have entreated the venerable Erudito himself to come and aid us, my friends, had he been younger and more able to endure the fatigues of public life; as it is, his wise retirement and prudent devotion to study and quiet leisure plainly evince that such a sacrifice ought not to be asked at his hands; but his nephew, gifted by nature, educated by his learned relative, generous in heart, sound in principle, simple in conduct, in the full vigour of youthful manhood, and capable of highest self-devotion,—he is the very

being of all others fitted to be your prime minister, the guardian of his country's welfare and honour, and the counsellor of your aged monarch.'

"The Princess Eudora retired amid the acclamations of the people; and the news soon rung through the city that the old king was restored to his throne,—that Erudito's nephew, Uberto, was to be elected prime minister,—and that their beloved Eudora, by choosing to remain but a princess at present, was proving herself still more worthy to be a queen hereafter.

"When she had a little recovered from her late excitement, I ventured to ask permission to approach the couch where she lay, and proffered what I guessed would be the best restorative to her spirits and inward hope. I offered my services to set out immediately to fetch Uberto and inform him of what had happened. The princess smiled her old gentle smile, and said in those winning tones that I had so loved in Biondello, 'My true knight still! to offer to depart even at this hour! Faithful, kind heart!' Then she added in a lower voice—'Tell him nothing, but of the call his countrymen make upon his services—that will suffice to rouse his noble heart, I know. Once again,—silence and discretion.'

"No token from Biondello? not a word?" enquired I, wishing to take some comfort to my friend, and emboldened by the thought of his suffering letter.

"Eudora paused for an instant in maiden hesitation, then faltered—'Tell him that Biondello is safely returned to his friends,—and happy,—could he

but once see the old days again, when he sat by the side of his master in Uberto's little study.'

"I knelt to kiss her hand, and set forth immediately; for the afternoon was far advanced, and I feared that evening would close in before I could proceed far on my journey; so that I should have to pass the night in the wild and desolate district which I had heard lay between the city and the place where old Erudito had chosen his retirement.

"At first my way was pleasant enough; it led across the peaceful valley that I knew so well, where Uberto's cottage was situated, and where I had spent so many pleasant hours with that kind and noble friend. His flock were nibbling their green supper, as I passed, and I thought of their absent master, as I looked at the lad who had been left in charge of the fleecy creatures by the thoughtful provision of Eudora; she had desired him to remain here, not only as shepherd, but in order that Martha might have some one with her in the cottage at night, the faithful blind woman staying to take care of the home of her kind master, and arrange his books against his return, which she fondly hoped would not be long delayed.

"When I reached the foot of the mountain range that rose abruptly on the opposite side of the valley, I turned to gaze once more on the tranquil spot, praying that I might be destined to return to it ere long with my friend; and, as my eye rested on the minarets and spires of the distant city beyond, that lay bathed in the last rich glow of the departing

western sun, I joined that other noble-hearted being in my aspirations, and blended their joint names in my prayers for their happiness. Then turning to the east, which looked as if its dark blue sky had deepened many shades during the few moments that I had turned my gaze upon the splendours of the sunset, I began my toilsome ascent, trusting to the active exertion requisite in attaining the summit for sufficient warmth to protect me against a sharp, chilling wind that was beginning to be perceptible in this mountainous region, and to spring up with the decline of day. My path became more rugged and difficult as it became more steep, but I knew I could not wander far from my right road, as I had heard Uberto mention that his uncle's abode lay due east from the cottage, and after the sun set, I could guide my course by the stars, which fortunately shone out soon after.

“As night came on, the way grew wilder and wilder; I could distinguish yawning caverns and deep rifts and chasms on either side of me, that spread wide their hollow jaws, as if they were gigantic animals standing ready to devour me; gloomy pine-trees waved their spiring bodies to and fro in the night-wind, as if mocking and beckoning to me; lofty, towering rocks sprung up sheer from the side of the narrow ledge on which I sometimes had to make my way, and threatening cliffs overhung their mighty heads above me, as if nodding destruction from their stony sleep. Ever and anon, I was startled by the sharp cry of some bird of prey, that

flapped its powerful wings, and sailed across a neighbouring ravine, roused by my approach and the unusual echo of a human footstep; and then, at intervals, I heard the prolonged howl of the wolf, the wailing, discordant yell of the hyæna, with its horrible mingling of weeping complaint and malicious laughter, and once I heard the deep roar of a distant lion. I looked up hopefully, beyond the crags and caverns, into the blue sky that covered all with its blessed canopy, and kept my heart firm, in the midst of that wild scene, by thinking of the friend who had so lately passed through it, sustained only by just principle and a consciousness of doing what he felt to be right and honourable. 'And shall I, who possess hope of coming happiness for those I love, to support and encourage me, be less brave-hearted than he? Let me be worthy of his example, of his hospitable kindness to the shipwrecked mariner, and let me go boldly on to carry tidings of joy to his stranded hopes.'

"Such thoughts as these elevated and strengthened me, and led me trustfully on through the perilous path of that lonely night, and, when morning dawned, I found myself but a few hours' journey from the mansion of old Erudito. Mayhap about eleven o'clock I reached his abode, which was a quaint, curious building, of irregular form, surmounted by a lofty observatory, and situated in the very heart of this remote and solitary region. I knocked at a small wicket that stood in one angle of the rough wall that enclosed the tenement, and,

after waiting a few moments, the gate was opened by an odd little figure, that looked singularly in keeping with the quaintness of all around. It was that of a little squat girl, with a square face, set upon square shoulders, which surmounted as square a skirt, terminated by two splay feet with square toes. Her face looked as if it were covered with strained parchment, instead of skin, in the middle of which was stuck a small flat nose ; her eyes looked like two pierced holes, and her mouth like a straight slit cut across the said parchment with a pair of scissors. I think I never beheld a more ugly little body in all my life, for, though she seemed not to be more than eighteen, she had none of the grace or beauty that mere youth itself bestows on the person. She bobbed a quick little ducking curtsey, in reply to my inquiries, and led me into the house, while she went to inform her old master of my arrival. She had not waddled away above two minutes, when I heard a quick firm step, and, in another moment, my hand was warmly grasped in that of Uberto. He took me, at once, to his uncle's study, where the venerable sage greeted me with a cordiality and energetic kindness that contrasted well with the snows of age crowning his reverend head, and shewed how green and fresh philosophy keeps the hearts of her votaries. As vivid and as keen, too, did the feelings of this old man prove themselves still to be, when I disclosed the object of my mission, and told him of the universal call made by his countrymen upon the talents and virtues of his nephew ;

how they looked to him as the future guardian of their best interests, and how his sovereign confirmed their election by his own wishes to have Uberto as his prime minister. Seeing that his nephew hesitated, Erudito said:—

“‘Demur not, my son. Obey the call of your countrymen, and prepare to fill the honourable post they assign you. Far from me would it be to counsel you to seek the paths of ambition, and quit the peaceful haunts of simple rural life, and calm, contemplative study, for the delusive hope of rising as a statesman. But summoned, as you are, to the helm of the government, by the people’s confidence in your virtue and their conviction of your ability, you have no right to withstand the appeal; it is your duty to respond, and accept it, with steadfast faith and modest reliance on your own purity of conscience and high resolve to devote yourself solely to the promotion of their welfare.’

“‘But the motive which banished me hither—’ faltered Uberto.

“‘It was a worthy one, and acted upon in the spirit of self-denial and strict rectitude, my son,’ replied the sage; ‘but I feel by no means sure that it was not hastily and inconclusively formed, and that, if your mind had had longer time to exercise its judgment, you might not have resolved upon absence, as a necessary sacrifice on your part.’

“The young man looked into his uncle’s eyes, where played a benignant light, almost amounting to a smile, then turning to me, he murmured,—

“‘And Biondello?’

“I repeated the precise words I had been bid to use as Biondello’s message, and Uberto, uttering one deep sigh, merely said,—

“‘Be it so! The good of my native land must be my hope now. In that I’ll find my happiness and life.’

“Once resolved, he lost no time in setting out, and, after taking a cordial leave of old Erudito, who gave me a small volume, of curious worth, as a parting gift, we left his mansion on our way home. The path through the mountains, viewed by daylight, and in the company of a friend, seemed far less wild and perilous than it did in the lonely night-time, and Uberto beguiled its tedium by cheerful conversation and animated discussion. He seemed to avoid, with peculiar care, all allusion to the agitating scene which had preceded his departure from his cottage home, as if he did not choose to trust himself with so interesting a subject; but he spoke frankly of his hopes of filling his new appointment worthily and beneficially, of his venerable relative, Erudito, of the young heart and mind that dwelt in his old frame, and of his contented solitude, where he saw no human being but Quadrata, the odd-little damsel I had seen on my arrival.

“I smiled involuntarily, as I recollected this quaint little fright, and Uberto, observing it, said,—

“‘Ay, to you, who know nothing of her but her strange ugliness, I don’t wonder at your smiling at my uncle’s choice of a handmaiden; but he, with

the eyes of true wisdom, can descry the loveliness of honesty, cheerful activity, faithful service, soft nursing, thoughtful tendance, zealous care, watchful assiduity, and constancy of attachment, beneath the parchment skin and angular figure of poor little Quadrata.'

"We reached the valley towards nightfall, and Uberto resolved to remain at the cottage till morning, when he might present himself to his sovereign, at the palace, and tender in person his required devotion and service.

"Accordingly, next day we proceeded to the court, and were at once ushered into the royal presence. All was precisely as I had beheld that brilliant scene on a former occasion; but the figure that occupied the couch by the side of the old king was now veiled not only by her luxuriant shining hair, but was covered from head to foot by a gauze of golden fabric that fell in bright folds to the very floor. Uberto stood forth with firm manly dignity in that august assembly, his handsome intellectual head and simple attire forming no inapt contrast with the glittering crowd that stood around. It seemed as if the shepherd-god, Apollo, had descended amidst mortals to assist and guide them with the glorious wisdom they lacked.

"With noble yet modest words, Uberto then knelt and tendered his services to his country and his sovereign, and vowed to devote them zealously and faithfully in so righteous a behalf to his life's end.

"The aged monarch raised him, accepting him as

the minister chosen by the voice of the people, and welcomed by himself; adding, that it had been further resolved, that the hand of the Princess Eudora, his daughter, should be conferred upon him in marriage, to strengthen his attachment to the throne and the interests of the kingdom, by an alliance with the heiress-apparent to the crown.

“‘In choosing such a husband for my child,’ said the old king in conclusion, ‘my people secure to her a more congenial consort than I formerly meditated in the son of Lord Ignorio, and to themselves in future a wiser monarch than I fear I have made them; but I shall thus have the comfort, in my old age, of seeing the happiness of my daughter and of my people both ensured.’

“‘Uberto paused, as if grieved to respond to these gracious words of his sovereign by aught but grateful acquiescence, but, collecting fortitude from a conviction of what was the only righteous course for the sake of all parties, he, in simple but firm words, avowed that he was compelled to decline the intended honour of the princess’s alliance, for that his affections were irrevocably fixed upon another object.

“‘Let not your majesty or her highness reflect upon me for my sincerity,’ he said. ‘Feeling as I do that my attachment, though hopeless, is eternal, I do not dare to outrage the princess by marrying her to a man with a dead heart. I have bid adieu for ever to love, and devote myself to patriotism alone.’

“‘He knelt, inclining lowly and reverently to the veiled princess, and withdrew from the presence.

“As we passed through a long gallery of the palace, a young page followed us hastily, and said that he was charged to request we would follow him to an apartment where the person who sent him desired an interview with Uberto and myself.

“Somewhat surprised, we obeyed, and found ourselves led into a large ante-room, at one end of which there was a small door, towards which the page mutely pointed and withdrew. Uberto looked at me for an instant, then advanced towards the small door, which he opened, and we beheld the little cottage study, its humble walls, its shelves of well-worn books, its simple wooden table, and the old oaken settle—all, as if suddenly transported by magic within the walls of the palace. Uberto sprung forward; for, on the oaken settle, lay the well-known dark velvet hunting-suit and the crimson silk net that bound the temples of his beloved pupil. He seized it passionately, and pressing it to his lips, cried, ‘Biondello—dear, dear Biondello!’

“‘I am here!’ murmured the soft tones of a voice close beside him.

“He raised his eyes and beheld the veiled princess, who had glided quietly into the room meanwhile. Uberto’s gaze fastened upon the golden screen from beneath which he had heard the sounds that thrilled to his heart’s core—‘Biondello’s voice!’ he exclaimed.

“‘I am here!’ was again breathed gently, as the veil of golden tissue fell at her feet, and the natural veil of golden tresses alone shaded the beautiful

blushing face of Biondello—Eudora, Uberto's pupil, friend, and mistress, all revealed in one!

“He knelt to receive assurance of the delicious truth; while she, eager to reward his self-denying honour and loving constancy, told him all her story, from her early thirst for knowledge, feeling its necessity to enable her worthily to fulfil her high destiny; her seeking his cottage in obedience to her dying mother's injunctions; her assuming disguise that she might gain the sterling education of a man, the better to fit her for reigning hereafter; her adopting the name of him once destined for her husband; her studying so happily in the cottage under the tuition of her shepherd-master; her seeking his aid; her grief at his flight; her joy at his return doubled and trebled by his noble refusal of Eudora for the sake of the lost Biondello;—all, all was told, up to the very moment when she had prepared this blissful surprise for him in the very scene of their former happy pursuits.

“‘I have had this room fitted up for my study, Uberto,’ added she; ‘the very model, as you see, of our peaceful happy one in the cottage. Here, when wearied with cares of state, or oppressed with the splendours and hollow grandeur of court life, will we repair to seek in quiet reading and placid contemplation, repose and refreshment. Here, too, in this humble study, and from these well-worn books, may we gather wholesome lessons of modesty, self-scrutiny, and gentle forbearance towards others, as well as comfort, hope, and gratitude towards the bounteous Giver of all good.’

“It was not long before I had the pleasure of witnessing the completion of the happiness of my friend Uberto in his marriage with the Princess Eudora. But, after the nuptials, which were celebrated with great magnificence, and amid the universal rejoicings of the people, my old love of wandering returned upon me with its usual force; and now that I could no longer hope to be of any use to my friends, I asked and obtained permission to leave the court, and once more go to sea. My generous friends would fain have loaded me with rich gifts and costly tokens of their remembrance; but I said that at my age, and with my wandering tastes, I could have no possible use for wealth; however, I told the princess that there was one precious gift in her power to bestow upon me, if she would pardon the presumption of my solicitation in consideration of the reverential love which dictated the request. Her gentle voice and smile then encouraged me to beg for one of those shining tresses, as a memorial of the touching scenes with which they were so tenderly associated;—scenes in which I had once borne a part, and which would ever be remembered by me with affectionate interest and love for my two dear and honoured friends.

“She turned with her usual dignity and winning grace towards her husband, saying—‘Those tresses are all Uberto’s now; but he shall sever one for you, and it shall be our joint gift.’ And, when her husband divided the lock from her fair head, she placed it in a small crystal locket set round with large dia-

monds, which she took from her bosom, and, placing the chain which held it round my neck, she said—
‘The contents I know you will keep ever, for the sake of your loving friends; but promise me, Kit, that, should you at any future time want money, you will convert these gems into a more available shape for use than they are at present,—which will do well enough now as a small compass for a sailor’s hoard, and permit of his carrying it always about his person. Farewell; think sometimes of your friends, Uberto and Eudora, as they often will of their true knight, Kit.’

“The ship in which I now set sail, could boast of a very superior crew to those among whom I had last been in company. They were a light-hearted, excellent set of fellows, with a good-natured captain at their head, and I spent my time very easily and agreeably among them. Indeed, on recalling to memory their many good qualities and sociable disposition, I cannot reconcile their conduct in sailing away without me, with what I remember of their general behaviour. For it was this very ship that I told you of in my first yarn, that sailed away and left me on the Island of False Appearances. I can only account for it, by imagining that they thought I had fallen a victim to the fatal streamlet as well as my unfortunate companions.”

“Oh then, now we shall hear what you did when you got away from the malicious dwarf, by the help of the amiable giant,” said Dick Swallow.

“Yes,” replied Kit; “I may as well go on at once

from that period of my history; for no particular adventure happened to me in the interval of our leaving the country of King Imbecilio, with the exception of the frightful drought from which we suffered for some days previous to our arriving at the island, where we landed in search of fresh water, as I mentioned to you. The remembrance of that dreadful thirst, and its accompanying evils, even now comes over me with a horrible sense of pain whenever it crosses my mind. The sea and sky were of one lurid copper hue, and seemed to spread in scorching sheets of blazing metallic substance around us, reflecting fierce unrelenting defiance upon our parched mouths and blistered skins. Burning heat glowed above with intolerable fervour upon our aching heads and languid moistureless eyeballs, that sought relief in vain from the waters below, which seemed but a vast dazzling mirror, doubling and intensifying the surrounding furnace. Fevered and exhausted by exposure to such sufferings, no wonder that my two comrades rashly sought relief at all risks, and embraced even death in the shape of irresistible fresh, cool, delicious, spring water.

“But, to resume the thread of my yarn, when I quitted the shore in the boat that afternoon, I had a notion that I was among a sort of cluster of islands, that did not lie very far apart from each other in those seas; so I rowed away for some time straight from the land I had just left, in the hope that I might reach some other before evening should close in. Night, however, came on while I was still in the

open sea, and nought could I see but water around me and sky above. The blue arch of heaven deepened and deepened the tone of its azure expanse, and then out came the blessed stars to cheer and revive me with their hopeful eyes. I gazed towards those countless orbs, and let my spirit take free range amid the firmament, where a supreme law appoints their mighty course, and bids them shed consoling radiance upon the humblest midnight wanderer. From the trackless paths of ocean, from the dreary waste of waters, as from the stifling crowds and most populous haunts of his fellow mortals, may the spirit of man ascend in yearning aspiration on a starry night; and seeking communion with those sublime creations of the Almighty in their unfathomable remoteness, feel himself elevated as if to the presence of his God.

“My soul strengthened and my arm nerved by this contemplation, I rowed stoutly on, till suddenly I became aware that I was nearing land, though it seemed to be sterile and unpromising, so far as I could discern by starlight.

“The shore seemed to be composed of steep rocks; for, on approaching, I found that the sea rose in breakers against the masses of hard stony cliff that projected their inhospitable fronts, as if to bar my advance, and refuse any response to my hope of effecting a landing there. However, my exhausted frame and limbs, weary with so many hours' rowing, warned me not to be easily baffled in seeking repose and shelter; I, therefore, kept off shore as well as I could, while I endeavoured to coast round in search

of some favourable cavern, where I could creep in for the night, or succeed in finding some rather less rugged access than any which had hitherto presented itself.

“ At length I came to a kind of craggy inlet, on one side of which the rocks shelved down to the water’s edge so low, that I believed I could climb up on to them from the boat, which with some difficulty I succeeded in doing. But I had no sooner attained this flat shelf of rock, than I perceived that I had quitted my little vessel without having taken the precaution of first landing the provisions that had been given me by the friendly giant, and which, from all that I could see around, was the only food I should be likely to procure that night. I was accordingly compelled to leap back into the boat, though it was tossed about so by the surge that it was a narrow chance I did not plunge into the waves instead. However, I succeeded in securing the precious keg of well-water, and the two loaves in which the giant had enclosed the butter and the cheese, and then I contrived to scramble up once more on to the shelving platform of rock beside them, though, the instant I had done so, the thought flashed across me that I had no means of mooring my little vessel. No bush, no tree, not even a stump or a jagged point of rock, to which I could lash the rope and secure the boat. Even if it escaped uninjured by the breakers, I could scarcely expect that it would remain in the bay where it now was; and, if it drifted away before morning, what chance of escape had I

from this stony shore, where my first welcome had been so inhospitable and unpromising? But every spark of hope, with respect to the frail bark, was speedily destroyed by the boiling waves; they tossed it to and fro, and flung it against the savage rocks, that threw it contemptuously back: and thus, almost as I gazed, I beheld my sole means of retreat dashed to pieces before my very eyes. I comforted myself as well as I could with the only glimpse of consolation I had at that moment the heart to perceive; which was, my having fortunately preserved the food and water from perishing with the boat. So, determining to avail myself to the utmost of this alleviating circumstance in my situation, I made a hearty meal of one of the half loaves, some of the butter and cheese, and a draught from the keg. After this, feeling refreshed, I secured the remainder of my provisions, by placing them carefully on a sheltered ledge in a rift of the rock, and I determined to set out in search of some more comfortable shelter for the night than that barren flattened reef could afford. I walked on some time, in the hope of meeting with a more fertile spot inland; but not a vestige of a tree, shrub, or plant was to be seen. Not only were there no trees; or so much as a ragged stunted bush any where about, but there was not even the least trace of verdure or vegetation of any sort, to clothe the bare sterile rock which spread every where beneath my feet as far as the eye could reach. Not a blade of grass, not a patch of moss, not a solitary slender lichen, sprung from the callous monotony around—all was sullen,

obdurate, unyielding granite. What was my dismay, when, after walking for about two hours, I found that I approached the sea-shore again,—a shore precisely like the one I had just quitted,—a mere flattened reef of rocks; and that, in fact, I was imprisoned in a small desert island, containing absolutely nothing to support nature, but was a mere huge granite slab, set in the midst of the ocean. I felt like one of those poor isolated insects I had noticed when a boy—some luckless ant, or beetle, that had by mischance strayed upon a floating leaf, and was carried away in strange waftage along the current of a brook or pond. Like that poor perplexed creature, I felt prompted to run hither and thither in mad bewilderment, and spend my strength in vain efforts to extricate myself from my hapless position. I checked these rash thoughts, however, as I best might, and lay down on the bare rock humbly and trustfully, grateful, at least, that there was the starry canopy above me, instead of a stormy and adverse sky.

“With the first dawn of light I arose, and, forlorn as my situation undoubtedly was, I could not be insensible to the beauties of that early morning, rising in mid ocean, and shedding its glories upon one desolate human being, apart from all his race in granite solitude. Blessed prodigality of Nature! that lavishes its wonders on desert wastes where no eye may ever mark the marvellous beauty, content to work its own bounteous decrees in magnificent profusion.

“Roseate clouds replaced the grey dawn; golden

streaks mingled their brilliant lines athwart the east, and then spread in radiant suffusion over all the heavens, ushering the majestic approach of the sun, that rose resplendent and supreme. I knelt in involuntary homage, offering my devotions to the Lord of the Universe, the beneficent Creator of that glorious luminary no less than of the human atom who thus beheld him arise, and who lifted his heart to their common Father. I now prepared to retrace my steps; endeavouring to find my way back to the spot where I had landed, and where I had concealed the food and water, of which I began to feel sensible want. At the same time I reflected that I must husband my provisions carefully, as I had no prospect of replacing them when they should be exhausted. But I soon found that my first difficulty would be to discover them; for, so great was the monotony of all around, so precisely was one portion of the scenery like another, and so little did one mass of rocks differ from the rest, that I spent the whole of that day in endeavouring to distinguish the particular ledge of rock in which I had deposited my sole means of subsistence. Night closed in before I had discovered it, although I searched diligently in many a chasm and rift of several reefs of flattened and shelving rock that appeared to me to be the one on which I had first effected a landing. Like it, they certainly were, but so unvaryingly similar, so perplexingly akin, were they in feature and form,—so utterly undistinguishable in their general appearance as well as particular detail, that I was compelled to abandon my quest—

at any rate until another day should dawn and lend me its light.

“The pangs of hunger, as well as the growing horrors of my situation, combined to keep me awake the greater part of that night, and I resumed my search the next day, exhausted as well as dispirited. I endeavoured to calculate on what side of the island the particular reef could lie, by recalling the position of the stars at the time I landed, as well as by the direction in which I had beheld the sun rise the previous day, which, of course, indicated to me the eastern quarter of the island; but I found the long fast I had sustained was beginning to have its effect upon my faculties, which, I felt, were becoming confused and indistinct in the process of thinking. Another night darkened upon me, with the added horror of approaching illness, for I felt fevered and restless, besides being conscious of a sort of wandering in my mind. This last feeling increased to such a degree before morning, that next day I was in a strong fit of the seaman’s disease, the calenture, or homesickness, that haunted me with terrible distinctness and pertinacity, for some hours. The granite island had faded completely from my sight, and I beheld the entire scene of my dear native village, with the vivid force of reality. There was the church spire against the background of an English sky, pale blue, flecked with light fleecy clouds; the church itself with its glistening windows reflecting the mild rays of the evening sun; the simple churchyard, with its green mounds and plain gravestones; there was the

little wicket-gate, leading to the village green, with the humble cottages skirting its sides, and straggling towards the green lane that led away into the high road; there were the fields, dotted with sheep and grazing cattle, the neat orchards, the little gardens,—every well-known object was there, palpably, visibly. Not only did I see these things actually before me, but my other senses aided the delusion, and I heard the gentle lowing of the kine, the bleating of the sheep, the barking of a distant watch-dog, the music of the church bells, and the murmur of children's voices, as they sported on the village green. My tears flowed, and my heart panted to be gone, that I might melt into this tranquil scene, and be for ever at rest. As I gazed, methought my mother issued from the door of our cottage home, and beckoned, smilingly, to her sailor son. I followed, as I fancied, and saw her point towards the oaken cupboard that contained refreshment for her poor wanderer. In my delirium I rose to my feet, and, pursuing the direction of my mother's hand, I went forward, towards what seemed in my heated imagination, to be the small cupboard in the cottage wall; when, on putting forth my hand to grasp the food I saw, I found that I held the very loaves that I had secreted on my first arrival, and that I, in fact, was guided, in my fevered vision, to the precise spot, the rift in the rock, which I had sought so long in vain.

“You may imagine that, though very stale, never had bread tasted so deliciously to me before, and the keg, kept fresh and cool beneath the shelter of the

rock, poured forth its pure contents to my parched lips, with a refreshment that no wine, however rare, could have produced. I slept well and soundly that night, and, when I awoke in the morning, I found, to my inexpressible joy, that my fever had abated, and that I felt healthful and strong enough to form very energetic resolutions of revolving some means of escape from my granite prison. But how were these means to be found? Not a morsel of wood anywhere, to make a raft—not a single stick to fasten my handkerchief to, that I might hoist it as a signal in case any ship should fortunately pass within hail. But not a vessel, not a sail, could I descry; the sea all round looked smooth and unruffled, and was as undisturbed and unproductive a monotony as the granite slab which formed my prison.

“Utterly baffled, and all my hopes of help by self-exertion thus reduced to nought, I stood mutely inactive, with folded arms, and a sort of dull resignation to the inert neutrality that my fate forced upon me, when, suddenly, I was struck by observing a glittering object high in the air, which, as it advanced and gradually descended, I perceived to be a horse of burnished brass. It alighted not far from the spot where I was, and then stood as still as a stone, looking as immoveable as the granite island itself. I shaded my eyes with my hand, as I gazed at this wondrous horse, which dazzled like the unclouded sun, and I tried to recollect what I had heard one of my early shipmates, Geoffrey Tabard, once tell me about just such a horse of brass.

“It was of fine proportions and of great breadth of chest, all formed for swiftness and endurance, just as Geoffrey had described it to me; and I remembered that he told me of its possessing the power of conveying its master to whatever quarter of the earth he pleased to ride, within the compass of a day; or, if he desired to soar like an eagle, it would bear him, without danger, through the regions of birds, to the place of his destination, and that, in its progress, it was so staid and so soft, that its rider might sleep, without fear, upon its back. Then, remembering how Geoffrey had explained that in its management there required no other skill than the turning of a pin that was fixed in its ear, I determined boldly to avail myself, if possible, of the means this brazen steed offered of quitting the granite island.

“I therefore approached resolutely, and laid my hand upon the rein, which was a bridle of curious workmanship, encrusted with jewels, and then the horse began to trample and caper, as if he recognized one who was acquainted with his nature. I mounted, turned the pin, and left it to the discretion of my charger to conduct me whithersoever he pleased, believing that, as he delivered me from peril, he would best know where to take me for my future good. We soared gently aloft, and he bore me through the air and across the sea, till we approached land, when, stooping from his flight, the horse alighted in a grassy plain, where I dismounted. Then, after remaining a few moments, as if rooted

to the ground, and quiet as a stone again, he suddenly rose from the earth, and the horse of brass soared away, and vanished from my sight.

“ I waved a grateful farewell to him, and turned to look round upon the place in which he had left me. I found I was in the neighbourhood of a thick wood, and, as I felt the rays of the noontide sun somewhat oppressive, I sought the refreshing shade of the trees, and wandered for some time beneath them, enjoying the cool air and the green luxurious repose of the bowery spot, affording such exquisite contrast with the hard, barren monotony of the place I had just quitted, the dreadful granite island. I revelled in the sweet smell of the wood, a mingled odour of wild flowers, boughs, blossoms, mossy bark, and teeming earth ; I, as it were, bathed my eyes in the verdant freshness of the overhanging leaves, the clear azure of the sky that peeped between the foliage, and the soft purple haze that appeared to suffuse the ground beneath the trees ; I bared my brow to the pure breath of heaven, my senses seemed steeped in refreshment, and I felt as if I drank in reviving influence at every pore.

“ Presently, I heard a sound of rural merriment ; I looked up, and beheld a troop of fauns and satyrs coming through one of the forest glades, shouting and singing a shepherd rhyme, and making the woods echo with their merry piping and gladsome revelry. On they came, wearing the ground with their horned feet and backward-bent knees, leaping like wanton kids in pleasant spring, and joyful as the

birds, while with them came dancing, hand in hand, nymphs and light-footed hamadryads, waving green branches, all just as I had heard Edmund Faery (another of the early friends of my first voyage), many and many a time, describe them to me, when he had told me of these wood-born people; his very words came into my memory, so vividly had he painted them. Though they were rude-favoured, misshapen creatures, with their frowning foreheads surmounted by rough horns and their strange limbs hairy and hoofed, yet there was an air of natural goodness about them and guileless enjoyment, that inspired confidence and liking. The procession stopped in an open, grassy spot, where the glade widened, not far from the place in which I stood; and then I saw the merry busy crowd prepare for a rustic feast, by spreading the ground with boar's and kid's flesh, goodly fowls and birds, piles of rosy fruit, and heaps of green and purple grapes, intermingled with drinking-horns, flagons, and swollen wine-skins.

“The jolly company were just about to seat themselves around on the grass, when espying me, they sent up a boisterous shout that made the welkin ring, then, gently grinning, they, by grotesque becks and barbarous courtesy, signified to me that I should approach and share their repast, while two buxom nymphs sprang forward, and, playfully crowning my head with green coronals and wreathing me round with vine garlands, they led me towards their wood companions, and, with uproarious mirth, pressed me down upon a mossy seat in the midst of them.

“No-wise averse, I enjoyed their wild hospitality and shared their hearty merriment, eating and drinking my best, and mingling my voice with their joyous shouts and sportive songs; but, when I began to perceive that joviality was merging into mad excess, and jocund hilarity was fast becoming mere tumult and noise, I bethought me that my human discretion had best take means to withdraw from the company of these wild wood-gods, while I yet preserved my senses. Thanking them, therefore, for their courtesy and good cheer in one more rousing cup, which I resolved should be the last, I seized the opportunity, when their attention was occupied in pressing some vast bunches of grapes into a huge bowl and crowning it with garlands, that they might drink a loving cup round to the health of old Sylvanus, and quietly rising, I stealthily effected my escape among the neighbouring leafy coverts, and soon lost sight of the uproarious train, thinking how closely my situation resembled that of some temperate guests of whom I had heard in civilized life, who were compelled to abscond by stratagem from the indiscreet society of some too-hospitable human host.

“I wandered on beneath the trees, until I came to the skirts of the wood, where I beheld a stately mansion.

“But I must tell you to-morrow what adventures befel me there, my dears,” said the old mariner, “for it is too late to spin any more yarns to-night.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE ABODE OF SUBTILIA ; DRUSILLA ; THE ENCHANTED FOUNTAIN ; ERUDITO'S GIFT ; THE LAKE, AND ISLAND RETREAT ; SIR LIONEL ; THE MYSTIC RINGS.

“You left off last evening just where you came in sight of a stately mansion, Kit,” said both the young Swallows in a breath, when they were next seated happily with their dear old friend the mariner.

“I bent my steps towards it,” resumed Kit, “and shortly approached the high bronze gates which formed the entrance to this lordly domain; they yielded to my hand, and I advanced through a long avenue that led straight to the flight of marble steps surmounted by the portal of the mansion. On each side of the avenue stretched a fine park, and, in the vicinity of the house I saw plantations and thick shrubberies, that bespoke beautiful pleasure-grounds and lovely gardens fit for voluptuous retirement. I ascended the flight of steps, and found that the portal, like the bronze gates, gave way at once beneath the pressure of my hand, and I entered a lofty hall of dazzling white marble, from the centre of which rose a staircase, that, after a short flight, diverged, and led to the rooms above. I went straight up to the first landing, where I found a magnificent suite of rooms,

draped with rich hangings, and ornamented with gilded mouldings and cornices; superb pictures decorated the walls, luxurious couches, soft carpets, mirrors, candelabra, and vases, were every where around in costly profusion. But I saw no one; I met not a single person amid all this splendour; not one occupant in this stately household. I wandered on through many rooms, all grand, all betokening lordly habitation, but still not a soul could I see; through many more, above, around, and below, but all was silent and deserted, and I strayed on alone—quite alone, without a sound but my own echoing footsteps, or the sight of a human countenance, excepting an occasional glimpse of my own, as I passed some huge mirror that reflected my wandering figure, and startled me with its unexpected motion amidst this still and silent solitude. I descended again to the marble hall, where I perceived some windows reaching to the ground, that opened on to the broad terrace which occupied the back of the mansion, and commanded a view of the gardens and pleasure grounds. I stepped forth, and stood for some time to admire the beauty of the scene that lay stretched before me, while I mused upon the strange desertion of a place so bountifully endowed. I gazed forth upon the lovely pleasaunce, the green alleys, the brilliant flower-beds, the bowery alcoves, the graceful statues, and silvery fountains, that diversified the tasteful elegance of the surrounding grounds, when, suddenly, my ear caught the sound of a plaintive voice uttering a low wailing lamentation. I looked hastily round,

but no one could I see ; and, indeed, the sound was too stifled and distant for it to have proceeded from any one in the open air, or near to me. I listened, and, hearing the plaintive sound repeated, I crept softly in the direction whence it seemed to proceed. It led me to the end of the terrace, and then, descending a few steps, I heard it more distinctly, and found that it seemed to issue from a low angle of the building among some flowering shrubs, that grew in a cluster near to the foot of the terrace. As I stooped towards them I distinguished these words, uttered in the disconsolate tone which had before reached my ear — ‘ Ah me, unhappy Drusilla ! Why bemoan thy miserable fate ! Why indulge in useless complaint, when there is no one near to listen and console ! Wretched, wretched maid ! Lost, abandoned, deserted by all, cease to deplore thy cruel doom, but let grief do its work—break thy heart at once, and die ! ’ Much moved by this melancholy plaint, and by the touching voice of woe in which it was uttered, I strained my eyes eagerly through the slender branches which screened the portion of the building whence the voice seemed to issue, and I discovered a low grated window close to the ground ; on looking still more intently, I could distinguish behind the bars the figure of a beautiful damsel, who was wringing her hands piteously, casting her weeping eyes up to Heaven, while she gave way to those bitter lamentations which I had overheard. I no sooner perceived her, than I endeavoured to make her aware of my presence, and to offer my services

in aid of her distress. I cut away some of the branches of the flowering shrub that intervened, and, approaching as near to the grating as I could, I begged her to believe that there was one near, anxious to assist and console her, would she but accept his services, and direct him how best they could be exerted in her behalf. The fair damsel, after the first blush of surprise at my sudden appearance, smiled graciously, and told me that she was an unhappy prisoner, confined in that lonely dungeon by the arts of a wicked enchantress, Subtilia, whose abode was the luxurious mansion that reared its walls above the cell of her victim; and then the damsel, who told me that her own name was Drusilla, asked me how I had contrived to escape the observation of Subtilia, and gain access to the neighbourhood of her dungeon, so as to discover its situation. I informed her of my having entered the house, of my having wandered all over it without encountering any one, and of my subsequent visit to the terrace, whence I had been fortunately led by the sound of her voice to the discovery of her imprisonment, from which I now longed so eagerly to be the means of her deliverance. She thanked me warmly for my proffered aid, and then, recurring to the former portion of my speech, where I had recounted my having found the mansion empty, she said:—‘Then Subtilia is absent; she is doubtless gone on one of her errands, fraught with mischievous peril to knights and damsels who have unhappily provoked her admiration or her wrath; for her partiality towards the one sex is as fatal as

her malignant hatred of the other. Had she seen you, gallant stranger,' added Drusilla, with a complimentary glance, 'it is more than probable that you would never have been permitted to emerge from her abode, even so far as to the terraces and gardens. She is an avowed admirer of handsome youths, and loves to see bravery and beauty swell her train of followers.'

"I felt abashed by this open flattery of Drusilla's, and hastened to check its course, by leading the conversation back to her own misfortunes, asking her if she could account for the animosity which had led Subtilia to cast her into the dungeon where she now languished.

"'Alas, no!' exclaimed the damsel, casting her eyes modestly down; 'unless it be that these poor charms have excited her envy, and drawn her enmity upon their unhappy possessor.'

"I looked at her as she stood there, in her blushing beauty, with the bright tears streaming over her glowing cheeks and glistening upon her coral lips, like dew-drops trembling in the cup of a rose, and, notwithstanding her consciousness and vanity, which revolted my better taste, I could not help admiring her loveliness, and permitting myself to be biassed in her favour by the irresistible attraction of youth, softness and distress.

"I bade her command me ever, vowed to deliver and protect her, though at the peril of my life, and besought her to bestow some token of her regard and acceptance of my devotion to her cause.

“The damsel blushed and smiled, and then, pressing one fair arm through the bars of her prison-window, she permitted me to kiss her white hand, on which I perceived a heart-shaped ruby ring. Transported with her condescending softness, I would fain have drawn this ring from her finger and placed it on my own, but she suddenly withdrew her hand, and, telling me the ring might perhaps be my guerdon, when I should have succeeded in delivering her from the power of Subtilia, she told me that I had best avail myself of the enchantress’s absence, by returning immediately to the house, seeking the way to the dungeon-door, and so freeing Drusilla from prison before the return of her enemy should interfere with our plans. I agreed to the reasonableness of this proposal, and asking Drusilla if she could afford me any indication of the direction in which the passage leading to the dungeons lay within the house, she told me that she had been conveyed thither from the great hall of white marble blindfold, and that, therefore, she possessed no clue wherewith to guide me in my search. However, doubting not that I should be able easily to discover the way, and anxious to lose no more time in endeavouring to effect Drusilla’s escape, I bade her farewell, and hastened to retrace my steps along the terrace, and return to the house.

“Arrived once more in the marble hall, I paused a moment, to calculate, as well as I could, the probable direction of the dungeon, when, opening a door to the right, I found myself in a long gallery, leading to a beautiful conservatory, filled with rare

flowers of every shape and hue. Convinced that this could not form the approach to the subterranean range of prisons destined for the reception of Subtilia's victims, I returned to the hall, where I again debated in what direction I had best proceed. I observed that several doors stood ranged on the two opposite sides of this hall, leading into galleries right and left through the extensive wings of the mansion, so, as I had no means of deciding which of these galleries was the passage I sought, I determined to go regularly through them all, in the hope of discovering the one I so ardently desired. The second door I opened admitted me into a gallery at the end of which I found myself in a spacious library, the third led to a superb aviary, another to a saloon of rarest sculpture, another to a well-proportioned music-room, each to various retreats of refined amusement and elegant leisure, but none that bore the remotest likelihood of conducting me to the range of dungeons beneath the building, which I longed as eagerly to find as others had probably desired to avoid. At length, at the end of one of the galleries, I beheld a staircase, that led down windingly to a dark vaulted passage, and, though evening was by this time closing in, I hesitated not to descend at once, hoping that I had at last discovered the way to the prison of the lovely Drusilla. The passage was of stone, and echoed drearily beneath my feet, as I proceeded, groping carefully on either side, to find the dungeon doors, which I concluded could not now be far distant.

“I traversed this gloomy abyss long in vain, and became somewhat alarmed, when I found that not a recess, not a vestige of a door or opening of any sort could I discover along its uniform blank stone walls, and that, instead of coming to any end or egress, the vaulted passage went on and on, in apparently interminable length, and made me feel as if I had entered a dreary labyrinth, in which there was an equally hopeless chance of returning, as of proceeding to the hitherto expected result. However, this very conviction of the difficulty of finding my way back, joined to the strong desire I had to find the dungeons, with the belief that this must be the approach to them, led me to persevere in my progress onward, and I toiled on in darkness and difficulty, but in unwearied search. It was like threading the mazes of a perplexed and oppressive dream ; but I was determined not to be baffled, if possible, in my search for the place of the beautiful damsel’s confinement, and so on, and on, and on I continued. But, at length, I felt a current of cooler air, and then the atmosphere around me freshened and freshened, until I emerged from a low arched portal, and found myself suddenly without the walls of Subtilia’s abode.

“I gazed around me in surprise, for the moon was shining brilliantly, and had risen high enough in the heavens to shew me that some hours must have elapsed while I was toiling through that dark vaulted stone passage, which was probably only a subterranean labyrinth, ranging beneath the whole extent

of the building, and forming a secret means of egress from the mansion. I found that it had brought me out beneath the avenue in front of the edifice, and the brilliant moonshine which silvered the tops of the lofty trees, and shed soft lustre upon every surrounding object, enabled me to find my way readily to the principal entrance; and I once more returned to the marble hall.

“Before I resumed my search through the few doors that yet remained unopened by me, I determined to repair to the grated window of Drusilla’s prison, that I might inform her of the fruitless search I had hitherto made, and, by assuring her that I meant immediately to return and prosecute it further, account for the suspense in which she had been detained, and revive her hope for future success. I hastened along the terrace, and was soon at the low grated window, but what was my dismay, when I received no reply to my reiterated calls upon the fair damsel’s name. I urged her, by every earnest expression I could imagine, to take pity on my uneasiness, and to relieve the torture I suffered in her behalf; I conjured her to believe that the delay in her deliverance had been occasioned by no want of ardour on my part, and that if it was this circumstance that offended her and kept her silent, I entreated she would at least have compassion on my fears for her, and assure me of her presence by a single word.

“But I pleaded in vain; no sound, not a sigh reached my ear, and I became convinced that the

dungeon no longer contained its fair tenant. Indeed, the moon shone so brightly, that I should have discovered the figure of the damsel, had Drusilla still occupied her prison, but not a line, not a hint of her fair shape could I distinguish, to break the uniform darkness of the space into which I gazed. Amazed and dispirited, I arose from the kneeling position I had assumed, the better to peer down through the dungeon window, and wandered on through the moon-lit gardens, musing vainly on the cause of my mistress's strange disappearance. The title I had given to Drusilla, in my reverie, struck upon my fancy, and I paused to consider what reason I had to look upon her in the light of a lover.

“I have seen her but a few hours, I know nothing of her qualities, and yet I talk of her as my love—my mistress—my future bride! Do I love her? Do I wish to pass my life with her? Do I really desire to devote my future existence to this damsel?—to the formation of her happiness and my own in our union?” I asked myself these questions, and was surprised to find how the remembrance of her beauty was the sole response, and how that faded before the recollection of her evident coquetry and vanity, which had been thrown into shadow while my eyes were dazzled with her personal charms in the presence of the fair Drusilla.

“My own conduct, too, did not satisfy me, upon reviewal, any more than hers in the interview between us. As I thought over these things, I drew

from my bosom the little volume that had been Erudito's parting gift, and which I always kept there securely, together with Eudora's crystal locket. I had noticed that the little volume bore the title of 'The Book of Self-Disenchantment,' and I now turned over its pages, while I revolved my own behaviour, as if consulting its truths in aid of my self-scrutiny. The vivid rays of the moon lent me their light, and there was a native effulgence in the book itself, that enabled me to trace the characters, as if I had been in the broad sunshine. And yet it was not exactly that I read the volume. It was rather as if I were looking into a mirror; the leaves seemed to present to me a sort of mental looking-glass, in which I beheld a transcript of motives, words, and actions. I saw reflected, as it were, my own views, feelings, and thoughts, with a clear outline of causes and consequences. I saw the coxcombrity of my own deportment to Drusilla, as vividly as I had lately beheld her coquetry of manner towards myself; I perceived that I was misled by foolish vanity, when I had fancied, for a moment, that I, a rough sailor youth, could be comely in a fair lady's eyes, or that she could possibly entertain a serious liking for a stranger of but half an hour's acquaintance.

“As I gazed into Erudito's gift, and contemplated this reflection of my own inner self, I was startled to hear a deep sigh breathed close to my ear, as if some one were looking over my shoulder into the open pages of the little volume which I held in my hand.

I looked round involuntarily, though I was so situated that no one could possibly be standing in the position which had suggested itself to me ; for, I had seated myself on the marble brink of a large vase-like basin, in the centre of which played a fountain that sent up its silver sparkles among the moonbeams, and fell again in graceful showers to the rippling water.

“ But the sigh was repeated, and I heard the plaintive voice of Drusilla murmur—‘ And is that my real picture ? Are those my true colours ? Am I indeed the worthless vain coquette I there see depicted ? Ah, Lionel, well art thou vindicated ! Deeply, fatally, are thy wrongs avenged, by my present hopeless admission of the justice of my doom !’

“ The voice ceased, and I heard nothing but the soft plashing of the fountain, and the thrilling notes of a nightingale in the neighbouring grove.

“ Drusilla ! speak again ! Drusilla ! ‘ Where are you, lady ?’ I exclaimed impetuously.

“ ‘ You see me not, gallant stranger, though I am close beside you,’ replied her voice ; ‘ by the cruel sorceries of the enchantress Subtilia, I am nightly transformed into this fountain ; as evening closes in, I quit my dungeon, and with it my human shape, which I resume not until morning dawns, when I exchange one imprisonment for another. The free open air, the close cell, are equally thralldom for poor Drusilla ! Listen, stranger,’ she continued, ‘ for your magic volume has unsealed my eyes, and bids me value truth now above all things ; listen, and I will

tell you the whole of my sad history, of which I allowed you to understand only a portion this morning. I am a king's daughter, and my early years were spent in the midst of unbounded luxury, unchecked whims, unlimited praise of my beauty, and injudicious indulgence of all kinds. My natural defects were thus cherished into faults, and my caprice, disdain, and tyranny, when I came to have suitors, were intolerable and incessant. Of all of them, I only really loved Sir Lionel, but I never would permit him to feel sure of this, and scarcely treated him better than any of the others. Still, spite of all, he loved me fondly, faithfully; and his ardent affection roused the vindictive jealousy of Subtilia, who had herself cast eyes of favour upon my handsome lover. One evening, I was pacing idly along one of the green alleys of the royal gardens, surrounded by a train of my admirers, one of whom I sent to catch a butterfly, another for a bunch of forget-me-nots, another for a riband for my dog's neck, a fourth for my pet monkey, and a fifth for I know not what, when I suddenly found myself alone with Sir Lionel, and, in the embarrassment of the moment, instead of despatching him like the rest upon some frivolous errand, I said—'and you, sir knight, may give me that opal from your finger if you think fit to bestow it upon me: it will be a meet gift, you know, for one so changeable as you have frequently told me that I am.'

“‘Be true to your own better nature, then, lady mine,’ said Sir Lionel, emboldened by the encourage-

ment I gave him in my request ; ‘ give me that ruby ring of yours in exchange for my opal, and tell me they shall bear witness of our mutual constancy.’

“ ‘ When I do give you that heart-shaped ruby, sir knight, you may boast of my constancy,’ I exclaimed, haughtily drawing back.

“ ‘ He was incensed at the sudden change in my manner, which, an instant before had been all playful softness, and said, ‘ Then I part not with my opal, unless in exchange for the ruby.’

“ ‘ I would sooner exchange places with that fountain,’ said I, pointing carelessly to one that played near us, ‘ than part with my ring to Sir Lionel.’

“ ‘ Sir Lionel will never submit his heart to your sway, fair tyrant,’ exclaimed my lover impetuously, ‘ until you yield him your ruby ring, and own that you have used unworthily a heart hitherto but too willing to devote itself to your service.’

“ ‘ He broke from me with these bitter words, and I have fatal reason to believe that these rash speeches of ours threw us both into the power of Subtilia : for, that very night, her enchantments were put in force against myself, and I have no doubt my unfortunate lover is equally subject to her spells. There is a retired spot, towards the south, not far from hence, — a small island situated in the centre of a lake, where the enchantress devotes herself to pleasure, and to the society of those whom she has enwoven in her fatal snares. Here, I fear, my dear knight, Sir Lionel, has been conveyed ; and, alas ! my own conduct scarcely permits me to hope that his constancy

has been proof against the wiles doubtless employed to win him to her allegiance. It is but too probable that he has yielded to her blandishments, and has for ever abandoned all thought of the miserable Drusilla !’

“ ‘Then you regret your false knight, and still love only Sir Lionel!’ I exclaimed, in a tone which I vainly endeavoured to render free from reproach.

“She understood me, and replied with new-born frankness, the offspring of her perusal of Erudito’s magic gift—‘My behaviour to you this morning, gallant stranger, warrants your rebuke. It was my old self then acting. It was the coquette—the vain thoughtless beauty—heedless of what pain she might inflict, while intent solely upon conquest and securing new worship. Be generous as you are brave, kind stranger, and withdraw not your proffers of assistance from an unhappy damsel because she has the courage to own the truth. Be content to think her candour renders her more worthy of your help, though not of your love; and still benevolently strive to relieve her from distress, even when she honestly avows that she loves another better than yourself. Above all, do not call Sir Lionel, false knight. He was ever true and kind, till I urged him beyond forbearance. His further submission to my caprice and tyranny would have been scarcely manly; and if, indeed, his constancy should have swerved in the trial to which I doubt not it has been subjected by the arts of Subtilia, I may mourn his loss—as I must eternally—but I shall have only my own former self to blame for the cessation of his love.’

“Again the voice ceased with a plaintive cadence; and I heard nought but the nightingale’s musical descant and the soft plashing of the fountain, which seemed faint echoes of Drusilla’s love and tears.

“Her contrition and her ingenuous self-blame, wrought their due effect upon me, and, after a moment’s pause, I burst forth in cordial expressions of my willingness to serve her, and to do all I could to restore the lovers to each other, unthoughtful of any more selfish reward than the happiness of promoting theirs.

“‘Tis no more than I believed of you, generous stranger,’ she exclaimed; ‘your bearing is frank and noble; and think not now that I flatter you lightly, as I perhaps might have done before I beheld my two portraits truly depicted in your wondrous volume there. My abhorrence of my former self, and my hope of what my present self may eventually become through the meek teaching of an awakened conscience, authorize my telling you that I confide entirely in your friendly goodness, as expressed by your every look and manner. Take, then, this ruby ring, find out my true knight, Sir Lionel, and give him the token, with Drusilla’s full avowal of her affection, of her self-blame, and of her sole hope now consisting in his unaltered faith towards one, who will devote her whole life to prove worthy of his love.’

“As she ceased speaking, a small gold-fish swam towards the marble brink, holding in its mouth the heart-shaped ruby ring, which I immediately recog-

nized to be the one I had beheld that morning on Drusilla's white hand.

“As I reached forth mine for the token, I renewed my assurances of fidelity to her service, and, bidding her be of good cheer as to the success of my enterprize, I withdrew, determined to set forth in quest of her knight by earliest dawn on the morrow.

“I slept in one of the sumptuous bed-chambers in the deserted abode of the enchantress, Subtilia; but my dreams were calm, and my slumbers refreshing,—mayhap none the less so, that my mind was free from any thoughts of a flirtation, and the thousand tormenting solitudes and misgivings of a growing, though fancied preference.

“On the following morning I rose eagerly to my task, but, previous to my departure, I stole down to the low grating of the dungeon window, beyond the terrace, that I might say a parting word of hopeful comfort to the fair Drusilla, if she should be returned thither, and awake to note me.

“The morning sun was up in his glory, and darting his kindly rays athwart the iron bars, shewed me the form of the fair Drusilla stretched upon her prison-pallet, but with a smile of loving brightness and artless joy upon her countenance, that bespoke a pure renovated heart and dreams of a happy future. That her first waking thoughts might partake of their cheerful hue, I hastily gathered some wreaths of honeysuckle blossoms, emblems of hopeful constancy, and, twining them through the grating, I hurried away on my quest for her lover. Remembering her

words, I shaped my course in a southerly direction, and found that it led me across the green alleys and terrace-walks of the noble garden and pleasure grounds that stretched away from the back of Subtilia's mansion, until I reached the open country beyond. Here the aspect of the place changed; it became more hilly, broken, and precipitous, though still romantically beautiful, being clothed with abundant verdure, and the most luxuriant trees of graceful shape and varied species.

“I now approached the borders of a lake, that lay in calm glassy expanse, bearing in the centre of its crystal bosom a richly wooded island, green and bowery,—a fitting resort for an enchantress and her voluptuous train. A gilded boat floated idly to and fro, with purple sail and fringed awning, beneath which sat a nymph loosely clad in glittering raiment, whose occupation seemed that of ferrying between the shore and the island those who wished to cross the lake.

“Unwilling, however, to expose myself to the observation of any of Subtilia's minions, one of whom this nymph probably was, I resolved to wait until the gilded bark should have floated farther away, before I emerged from the thicket where I now stood screened; and, accordingly, when she had nearly reached the overhanging branches of the island trees, I plunged softly into the lake, and, swimming, speedily made my way to a green nook beyond the landing-place, where the nymph plied her bark. In this leafy cover did I lie quietly concealed for some

little time, drying my wet garments, and marking the beauty of the drooping boughs that dipped their pendant leaves into the waters, to meet and kiss their twin semblance; while the cool umbrageous reflection seemed to shrink and tremble coyly, gliding away elusive from beneath their playful touch.

“Presently a delicious sound of music crept into my ears; a lulling harmony of blended wind instruments, that swelled and rose majestically from murmuring softness into loud outpouring strains, then sunk again in soothing cadence; at one moment a tender passionate melody breathed alone its persuasive accents in eloquent entreaty—then the imperative thrill of silver trumpets and loud-voiced clarions would ring forth, amid the impressive sway and deep-toned richness of trombones and bass-horns, and anon the lingering liquid notes of recurring gentleness and beauty would enchain the attention in stronger and more willing bondage.

“Drawn by the luscious strains to a nearer enjoyment of their sounds, I left my leafy covert and made my way through the grove that surrounded me; but, on approaching a thick-pleached hedge that seemed to encircle the spot whence the music proceeded, I looked through the close interstices of its branches, and beheld a scene that at once rivetted my attention, and drew it firmly towards the object I had in view,—the disenthralment of Drusilla’s lover, Sir Lionel.

“On a rustic throne of moss and mingled flowers, reclined the enchantress Subtilia. She was attired in gorgeous satin robes, of the hue which the pheas-

sant's throat displays when the bird basks in rays of sunshine; on her arms and breast glowed gems of rarest water—the diamond, the sapphire, the ruby, and the emerald; and amid her raven hair lurked pearls of orient worth, like clusters of starry jasmin peeping from among their dark foliage. Her beauty well became this attire—it was haughty and commanding, and her eyes sparkled with conscious power and proud dominion.

“On the grass at her feet lay a steel-clad knight, idly waving a fan of snowy feathers, the riband of which still clung round the wrist of its beauteous mistress; but I marked that his eyes seldom rose to meet those of the enchantress, which often sought his: I saw that they were not occupied with the light figures of the nymphs who were floating in a mazy dance before him,—I could see that they were not even following the air-drawn circles which he was listlessly describing with the waving fan in his hand, but I perceived that they were most frequently fixed in sad abstracted gaze upon a ring which he wore on his finger—a lustrous opal. His continued abstraction at length became apparent to Subtilia, for, saying, ‘You are weary of this dancing and this music, dear knight; I will bid them begone, and you shall tell me what occupies your thoughts.’ She waved the nymphs to retire, and the musicians to cease playing. Then black pages, attired in white and scarlet, brought vases of gold, and flasks of crystal enriched with silver frost-work, from which they poured rubious and amber-tinted wines into goblets

encrusted with gems and crowned with flowers, and handed them, together with cool fruits heaped in tempting groups, upon chased salvers and chargers, to the enchantress and her guest.

“But the wine brought no exhilaration, the fruits no refreshment to the satiated palate of the knight; he appeared rather to be overwhelmed than revived by the succession of voluptuous pleasures heaped upon him by his gracious entertainer, and I could perceive that the languid sigh he uttered was not so much one of enjoyment, as of oppression and palled appetite, while his thoughts were so evidently wandering from the scene before him, that Subtilia again challenged them, and said,—

“‘You long for more stirring scenes; is it not so, dear knight? you weary of this soft repose and perpetual inaction. To-morrow we will repair to the main land, and enjoy all the vivacity and animation of the chase. My hunting-lodge shall be prepared, the fleetest hounds, the swiftest horses, shall be at our command, and we will rouse the stag or the ferocious boar, while our steeds bear us flying along to the spirited call of the bugles, and the far-resounding shouts of the hunters. Come,’ added she, seeing that a light beamed in the eyes of Sir Lionel, at this mention of something in the shape of active pursuit, and relief from the round of insipid diversions and sensualities in which he had lately been steeped, ‘come, you shall give me some reward for my promised hunting-party; you shall give me that gem from your finger. I grudge the many thought-

ful looks you bestow on the senseless opal; when transferred to my hand, I shall better endure that it should attract your gaze; it will remind you that that little hand seeks no dearer employment than to confer benefits and endless happiness on its cherished friend, Sir Lionel.'

"The enchantress extended her fair hand, as she spoke, with a smile full of blandishment, expecting that the knight would place the ring on her finger, fascinated by her encouraging condescension; but he merely raised the lady's hand to his lips, mutely declining to yield her the opal.

"Subtilia's dark eyes flashed fire at this refusal.

"'Ungrateful knight!' she exclaimed, 'no complaisance moves you, no generous confidence can win that stubborn heart of thine! Mock not my kindness, disdain not my affection, or learn to dread the animosity which may, ere long, replace in my bosom the too fond weakness with which I have hitherto regarded you.'

"So saying, the enchantress swept past, casting an angry glance towards him, and quitted the spot, surrounded by her train of pages and attendants.

"The knight fell again into his abstracted gaze upon the ring.

"'Too well she knows,' he murmured, 'that to yield her this, would be to relinquish the last slender tie which binds me to a better existence—the last slight defence I possess against becoming entirely the victim of her power. No! not to her—not to her,' he added, as he pressed the gem passionately to his

lips. 'Yet why should I cling to the vain hope that Drusilla will ever free us from the spells that enthrall us both, by uttering the humble words that would disenchant us. Alas! capricious, imperious, as she is, spite of her bewitching loveliness, how can I hope that she even bears me in remembrance?'

"On hearing these words of Sir Lionel, I stepped forth from my leafy screen, where I had hitherto concealed myself behind the hedge, and abruptly placed myself before him, confronting him, and holding forth my hand, which bore the heart-shaped ruby ring.

"He recognized the token instantly; he started, and, springing to his feet, made as if he would seize me by the throat, while he exclaimed,—

"'Caitiff! where did you obtain that ring?'

"'Hold!' I cried; 'let not the valiant Sir Lionel commit an injustice he may repent, and mistreat the messenger who bears him tidings of joy and deliverance. This ring is a token from the fair Drusilla, sent to her true knight, with loving words and acknowledgement of error.'

"'How! error!' exclaimed he wildly, as he seized the heart-shaped ruby, and covered it with kisses and fond murmurs of delight.

"I hastily explained to him the whole of Drusilla's adventure with myself, the revelation which the 'Book of Self-Disenchantment' had been the means of making to her, how it had opened her eyes to the frivolity of her past conduct, how deep was the regret she expressed, how fervent was her hope

of future improvement in her own nature, as well as of faith and constancy from him, and how she looked to him as her deliverer, her true knight, her fond lover, her long-beloved Sir Lionel; in fine, I delivered to him the whole of her humble, loving message.

“‘And can she deal thus generously by me? Error!’ again exclaimed the knight. ‘No, she was not so much in error, as it was I that was to blame for my petulance, my wilful rashness. But, let us go; let us hasten, kind stranger, to my beloved lady; let us lose not a moment in returning to free Drusilla from the toils in which the wicked Subtilia has so long held us both.’

“As we hurried towards the lake, I asked the knight how it was he could now escape from the bondage in which he had hitherto been detained on this island by the enchantress, and he explained to me that the words of his rash vow had placed him in her power, until the heart-shaped ruby ring should be yielded to him, with words of humility and acknowledgement of blame on the part of Drusilla. That, therefore, the possession of her token, which I had happily brought him, freed himself from the thralldom to which he had till now been subjected, and that it only remained to effect a personal exchange of the opal ring for the one she had sent him, with his lady, Drusilla, as speedily as might be, in order to liberate them both, entirely and for ever, from the wicked arts of Subtilia, who had no power to effect harm against two constant hearts bound by loving union.

“‘These hearts will be henceforth secured to each other on the firm basis of mutual esteem and self-diffidence,’ concluded Sir Lionel, with happy exultation, ‘and will be defended by their own faith and truth towards each other, no less than by the protection of the opal and ruby talismanic rings, which were the natal gifts of two powerful fairies, Dru-silla’s and my own respective godmothers. It was the unhappy difference which arose between us respecting these rings, that threw us within the power of Subtilia’s spells, but, once exchanged in amity between my lady and myself, the opal and the ruby will restore us to the safe guardianship of the benevolent fairies.’

“We lost no time in gaining the brink of the lake, where I hesitated for an instant, as I thought of the heavy suit of steel in which my companion was clad from head to foot, but Sir Lionel, wholly engrossed by his eagerness to rejoin his lady-love, would have plunged in and swum across, had not a light fairy skiff, drawn by two snow-white swans, approached the shore where we stood, and conveyed us across the crystal surface of the water to the opposite shore.

“Animated by this signal of his restoration to the guidance and protection of the good fairy, Sir Lionel sped on in the direction of his mistress’s prison, whence he hoped to effect her deliverance before the arrival of the enchantress, should she by chance have discovered his escape, and be in pursuit of him.

“Without mischance, we reached the gardens of

Subtilia's mansion, and I led Sir Lionel at once to the low grated window of the dungeon where his lovely mistress was confined. He knelt to receive the gentle greeting with which she flew to welcome him, but she had no sooner extended her hand towards him, to receive the opal which he placed with transport upon her slender finger, than the bars of her prison melted, and vanished into air, permitting Drusilla to throw herself into the arms of her true knight, and give him rapturous assurance of her love, and her true repentance of her former coy caprice.

“I left them to this blissful exchange of mutual forgiveness and tender vows, while I sauntered to and fro upon the terrace, until they should rejoin me to enter the mansion together, that we might seek refreshment after our day's anxiety and fatigue; for I, who had no lady-love to engage my thoughts, began to indulge in sundry visions of good cheer, and looked forward to the enjoyment of a comfortable repast, which I felt would be extremely acceptable, and which I knew, from previous experience, the larder and cellar of Subtilia's mansion could furnish in excellent abundance.

“I was revolving these pleasant speculations, and endeavouring to pacify my growing appetite (which you may have perceived, my dears, on various occasions in the course of these yarns of mine, always led me to pay careful attention to its demands,—a sailor should always stow in good ballast, you know), by considering with what delicacy I should first assuage

its voracity, when my attention was attracted by the appearance of a glittering object in the distance, approaching from the same quarter whence Sir Lionel and myself had just arrived; that is to say, in the direction of the lake.

“As it came nearer, I could distinguish the glittering object to be a golden car, in which sat the haughty Subtilia, drawn by four fiery dragons. They ramped and tore up the ground before them, emitting flames and glowing sparks from their nostrils; but the fury and rage that shot their angry lightnings from the flashing eyes of the enchantress herself, shone with a far more terrible glare, and seemed to scorch and wither all that she looked upon.

“I called loudly, to warn the lovers of the approach of their enemy; and they had scarcely reached my side, to learn the cause of my alarm, when Subtilia arrived at the steps of the terrace. But, ere the enchantress could descend from her car, two benignant forms were seen to emerge from the centre of a thickly clustering rose-bush near at hand; and, warning Subtilia to advance no nearer, they pointed triumphantly to the mystic rings, which shone upon the lovers' fingers in loving exchange, as they stood hand in hand together.

“‘Thy spells are broken! thy power is at an end, vile sorceress!’ said one of the good fairies. ‘Against frivolity, vanity, petulance, and rashness, the blandishments of the voluptuary, the arts of the wicked may prevail; but against truth, modest worth, and the loving faith that is the offspring of self-

knowledge and generous forbearance, the shafts of envy and the snares of worldly pleasure fall pointless and ineffectual. Begone, therefore, and seek no longer to disturb the union of two wedded hearts.'

"The enchantress quailed beneath the virtuous rebuke, and, with a dark scowl, shrunk back, while the other fairy godmother, who had remained silent while her sister addressed Subtilia, now advanced to where I stood with Sir Lionel and Drusilla, and bidding us follow her, she led us from the terrace through the marble hall of the mansion, into the avenue in front, where we found a travelling equipage with six cream-coloured horses awaiting us. Then, bestowing a blessing on the two lovers, she bid us hasten our departure to the court of Drusilla's father, where we should be welcomed by the good old king, who had long mourned his fair daughter's absence, and pined for her return.

"Before night closed in we reached the palace, where, you may imagine, great were the rejoicings which greeted the princess and her knightly lover on our arrival; and where, I assure you, I heartily enjoyed the sumptuous banquet which was served in celebration of their happy return. The royal household, I have no doubt, exerted their utmost resources and used their best speed; but, I can tell you, after such long fasting as mine, the least delay of the meal seemed an age, and when it did appear on table, I made up amply for lost time, as you must now do, my dears; so off with you, lest you reach home too late for supper."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIAMOND MERCHANT.—WILL WAVELANCE'S ISLAND.—
SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.—THE SIRENS.—POLYPHEMUS.—
EGYPT.

NEXT evening, the old mariner resumed his yarns as follows :—

“I spent some time very merrily and happily at this court, my dears, in the pleasant society of my friends, Sir Lionel, Drusilla, and the old king, her father, who all treated me most kindly

“But, to tell the truth, I often found myself hankering after the company of the sea-faring men who visited the city, or, lounging down to the wharfs and quays, to gain what intelligence I could of the arriving and departing vessels.

“One evening I was drinking some sherbet in a public garden much resorted to by ship-captains, merchants, and travellers, while I amused myself by listening to their talk, and their accounts of the different voyages they had made. My attention was more particularly directed to a small company who were assembled round a table in the neighbourhood of the one at which I sat, and who were highly diverted with the droll stories and adventures related for their entertainment by a jolly sea-captain, who

was drinking as hard as he was talking. On one side of him sat a quiet sly-looking youth, and on the other, a spare haggard man with restless eyes, and a nervous mouth, who, with the rest of the listeners seated round the table, were laughing at some exaggerated account of the wondrous properties of a small telescope which the captain was holding in his hands, and which he declared had been given to him by the Emperor of Morocco. The telescope itself was ordinary enough, being merely a glass set in brass and japan, but the case belonging to it, and which lay upon the table before him, close to his drinking goblet, I perceived was inlaid with precious stones. In the midst of the mirth occasioned by the captain's rhodomontade, I observed that the eyes of the youth were fastened upon the case, and I could see that those restless ones of the other man very frequently wandered in the same direction. Presently, the captain raised his goblet to his lips, while the company exploded in a roar of merriment occasioned by the witticism with which he had concluded his story, and in that moment I saw the youth seize the case, and convey it, as he thought, unobserved, into his bosom. But the sea-captain, though a good deal intoxicated, instantly perceived the loss of his case, and, turning suddenly upon the spare man with the restless eyes, he seized him by the collar and loudly accused him of the theft. The man turned deadly pale, trembled violently, and exhibited all the marks of guilt; when the sea-captain, storming and raving, insisted that he should be searched upon the spot, and compelled to

give up the stolen case. I stepped forward, and, as soon as I could gain a hearing amidst the uproar and confusion that had arisen, I bade them detain the youth and search him, as the real culprit. The lad, who till then had kept his demure look, and had waited calmly on the spot, as if merely one of the spectators, now vehemently protested his innocence, and asked them, in piteous tones, if they would stand by and see a poor lad insulted by suspicion and slander. The tipsy captain, with the usual blindness and obstinacy of those in his condition, seemed inclined to believe him, and returned pertinaciously to his collaring and abusing the spare man, who trembled still and resisted anxiously the threatened search. I interfered between them, and calmly repeated my desire that the youth should be searched first, as I had actually beheld him commit the theft, and convey the jewelled case to his bosom. On this plain accusation the bystanders seized the lad; and, in a few moments, his guilt was made manifest by the production of the case from his breast-pocket. There was a universal expression of disgust at the depravity of the young sinner, who proved to be a common thief well-known in the city, haunting the public places and thoroughfares of most resort, and trading upon his demure looks and his nimble fingers. As the crowd dispersed, and led him away, the captain made a sort of clumsy apology to the spare man for having wronged him by misplaced suspicion and rough usage, and then went away likewise, leaving the man and myself standing together on the scene of the late uproar.

We were no sooner alone, than the man with the restless eyes grasped me by the hand, and thanked me warmly for my interference, and for having saved him from being searched. Besides the ignominy, he told me that he had reason to dread other consequences of a personal search; from which, he said, he could never sufficiently acknowledge my goodness; in having been the means of preserving him. He then explained to me that he was a diamond-merchant; that he was in the habit of trading largely in those precious stones, and that he, in fact, had an immense quantity concealed upon his person at that very time, which, if discovered in the presence of so many people as had been there assembled, would have caused him never-ceasing anxiety and alarm for the future. He said that his gaze had been attracted to the precious stones set in the stolen case, merely from his habit of judging of the comparative value of gems, and that he had looked at them only with the eye of a lapidary. He told me that he was to sail on the morrow for Cairo, where he expected to dispose of his diamonds to great advantage; that the captain of the vessel in which he was about to sail was his own cousin, but that, nevertheless, he should be very glad if I would engage to accompany him in his voyage, as the generous protection which I had already afforded him was a guarantee that I should be faithfully attached to his interests. As I was very anxious to form an engagement which should lead me to sea again, and throw me in the way of fresh adventures, I closed with his offer, and

promised to be ready to go with him on the following day.

“When I took leave of Sir Lionel and Drusilla, they used many kind expressions of regard and gratitude; and, forcing upon my acceptance a superb ring of blended opals and rubies, in commemoration of my adventure with them, they entreated me to bestow on them the precious volume given to me by Erudito, which had been the means of conducting so greatly to bring about their present happiness, and which, they told me, should be handed down as a cherished heir-loom in honour and veneration to their children's children.

“I had not sailed many days with my new acquaintance, the diamond merchant, before I half repented that I had engaged to accompany him. The voyage itself was pleasant and smooth enough, but it made me melancholy to be with so spiritless, so uncomfortable a companion as this man proved to be. He was rich, but he was miserable; his wealth, instead of bringing him enjoyment, was productive of nothing but anxiety, mistrust, and unhappiness. His gains were a fancied source of joy and pride to him, but they were in reality no other than a nest of scorpions and enemies, which repaid his love by disturbing his repose and embittering his life. His whole existence was a dreary mistake; he believed he was acquiring treasure, power, luxury, felicity, and he was hoarding up wasted health, careful days, wakeful nights, ungenerous misgivings of his fellow-creatures, and the destruction of his own heart and mind. The man's

spirit, the very essence of his being, seemed concentrated and contained in those bits of sparkling stone which he carried constantly about his person, enclosed in a small casket. The burning solicitude to obtain them, and to obtain them at the lowest possible cost, in the first instance,—the gnawing restlessness that consumed his days in protecting them whilst in his possession,—the wearing anxiety and perpetual calculations as to what sums they would bring him when disposed of,—all combined to render his daily life a burthen and a constant fever, rather than the enjoyment of existence as vouchsafed by God to man. How is it that human beings will thus misuse their dearest blessings, and convert them into curses by their own wilful and mistaken blindness? I pitied this man, but I could not like or respect him—for all his riches; and, had it not been for the engagement I had voluntarily entered into, to go with him as far as Cairo, I should have sought the first opportunity of quitting his society and the vessel in which we sailed, on our next approaching land. As it was, I endeavoured as little as possible to note his defects, except as a warning to myself, should I ever detect a growing inclination for money, unaccompanied by a careful consideration of its right uses.

“Others, I could perceive, were less conscientious with regard to him than I was; for his cousin, the captain of the ship, who, notwithstanding the relationship between them, could perceive the suspicions which he shared in the merchant’s mind with all his other associates, did not scruple to play with his

cousin's fears, and amuse himself by exciting his alarm groundlessly and from mere love of mischief. He would make ill-timed allusions to the casket, which he said he knew was in his cousin's possession; he would banter him upon his expected gains, ask him where he kept his hoard of money, and torment him with all sorts of questions about his will, and about his own hopes of inheriting the major part of all these riches, which, he felt sure, were being amassed for him.

“This captain was a wild thoughtless fellow, and excited his cousin's distrust and dislike, I verily believe, almost as much by the character he had formerly gained of being a spendthrift, with a careless disregard of money—a dissolute prodigal, a reckless lender, and a good-humoured, though poor man, almost as much as he did by his teasing and vexing the merchant personally.

“One evening, when we had been nearly three weeks at sea, the ship was sailing placidly on beneath a sky of azure, when, of a sudden, a violent hurricane arose, and, in fewer moments than I could have thought it possible, the sea was dashing over the decks and sweeping all before them. I had but just time to mark where the diamond merchant stood, grasping anxiously at the beloved casket concealed within his bosom, while the captain cast a malicious look of scrutiny towards him, as he rushed past to deliver orders to the crew, when I was caught by a huge wave, as it rolled over the deck, and was carried in the midst of its overwhelming waters into the sea.

“The suddenness of the accident, the stunning force of the blow, the wild rush of the surges, all combined to deprive me of my faculties, and I was conscious of nothing more until I found myself upon dry land, and quite alone.

“My surprise was extreme when I discovered that I was lying upon soft grass, in a beautiful tranquil spot, and with a serene blue sky over my head; for, with returning consciousness, came the recollection of the cause of my accident, and I could not but remember that there was a storm blowing violently at the time I was swept overboard. This could not have been so very long ago, for night had not yet closed in, and I knew that it was rather late in the afternoon when the hurricane arose. I raised myself on my elbow and gazed around. What I saw was singular beyond expression in its effect upon me—for I felt as if I had suddenly been transported to a spot well known to me, though I was equally certain that I had never visited it before.

“There lay the familiar scene, all traced in vivid characters before me. I saw the simple cell, screened from the weather by a lime-grove; further on was a mantled pool, and around were scattered pines and cedars, crab-trees, clustering filberd-bushes, among which fluttered the jay and the nimble marmozet; I recognized the shore, that bowed over its wave-worn basis, washed by the foaming brine; the very grass seemed known to me as it grew, lush and lusty, and green beneath my feet; and the air breathed upon me sweetly, as if I had been previously conversant

with its peculiar fragrance. Had I met with all this in a dream? Or how? Or where?

“I arose and wandered on, where every successive step brought me among objects that struck me each with a sense of intimacy that belongs only to the scenes of childhood, many years’ loving acquaintance, or daily haunts and habits. Here were mazes, forthrights, and meanders, in which I seemed to have strayed ever; here were fresh springs, brine-pits, a short-grass’d green, tooth’d briars, among which lay strewn pig-nuts and berries, all homely and familiar as the lanes and hedge-rows of my native village.

“Nay, a solemn and strange music, that sounded marvellous sweet as it crept by me upon the waters, seemed by some subtilty of the isle to greet me as a thing natural and to be expected, as a part of the place I knew so well. The very terms in which these things addressed themselves to my fancy, as I gazed upon their actual reality, seemed the reflex of some immortal utterance that had one time or other vibrated in my hearing through human tones—and then, of a sudden, the whole truth flashed upon me. I remembered that I had heard my dearest early ship-mate, Will Wavelance, describe to me in his glowing words this very island, with a witching story of a banished duke, a virgin daughter, a shipwrecked lover,—treachery, treason, loyal faith, magic power, a sprite, and an evil human animal. I looked round eagerly, as if expecting to see some of the personages who had played their parts in this story, and on

this very scene; when, hearing voices, I stepped aside to mark who might come.

“There were two I knew well; the first was a savage freckled whelp, a thing most brutish, as disproportioned in his manners as in his shape, who bore under one arm a bottle made of the bark of a tree, and under the other a bowl full of water with berries in it, which he devoured ravenously, with low growls like an angry bison, while he taunted and reproached the airy being who was with him. This other was habited something like a nymph of the sea, though seeming more ideal still—but an air, a touch, a feeling; and, while he playfully replied to his companion’s taunts, he flitted to and fro in glad buoyancy, half flying, half swimming—now sporting under the blossoms that hung from the boughs near—now emulating the bee in rifling sweets from the cow-slip’s bell—and anon speeding back ere you could breathe twice, to answer his savage companion. I gathered from what passed between them, that the sudden hurricane had been raised by the malicious wickedness of the uncouth savage, and had been as suddenly allayed by the interference of the airy being, who had exerted his gentle spiriting in behalf of the freighting souls within our ship.

“I learned that the savage was left to enjoy his desired sovereignty of the island by the airy sprite, who cared only to be as free as mountain winds, and to frolic hither and thither amid the elements, as his sportive liberty-loving nature dictated, only interfering where his gentle influence might counteract the

baneful one which the brutish malignant disposition of the other led him to exercise whenever he could, against wandering mariners and luckless vessels that approached the island.

“Abruptly their conference came to a close, for the sprite, as if weary of further intercourse with so uncongenial a nature, suddenly sprung upon the back of a bat as it flitted by, and then, riding on the curled clouds, was soon lost to view, leaving the savage muttering curses and threats in the impotent rage of baffled spite.

“I, too, left the spot, determined to try and find my companions, whom I hoped to rejoin ere they should have quitted the safe harbour, where I had learned they had been conducted by the friendly sprite. As I passed the mouth of the cell, I looked in, and saw some scattered chess-men and the fragments of a broken staff, which looked as if it had been dug from its burial-place certain fathoms in the earth, by the loving labours of the delicate sprite, eager to preserve some relic of that noble master, whom he had once served without or grudge or grumblings in the old bygone times.

“In an odd angle of the isle I found the ship in safe harbourage; the men all in a sort of sleepy stupor, from which they awaked shortly after my arrival; then came the diamond-merchant and his cousin the captain, who, it seems, had suffered the same fate as myself; had been swept overboard during the tempest, and had been wandering ever since about the island, and had only just found their way

back to the vessel. They were anxious to set sail immediately; which we accordingly did, while they gave us a confused account of their having seen strange shapes, heard singular hollow noises, mingled with the hum of a thousand twangling instruments, and, at intervals, the sound of a pipe and tabor.

“As for me, I sat for some time apart, gazing earnestly on the receding outline of the island as our ship sailed away, and the shore faded in the distant horizon. The names of Ariel — Caliban — flitted across my memory as being those of the free sprite and the uncouth savage, and made me feel that I had indeed beheld the island described in immortal words by my beloved friend Will Wavelance. I remember him well—indeed he was one of those men whom, once to have known, is never to forget. He would sit with me in the night watches; and, let him talk, or let him be silent, there was something in his very glance that made all Nature seem more glorious and beautiful. The moon shed her rays more glowingly and more brilliantly for his presence; the heaving billows swelled more majestically, and their ripple shot forth more silvery sparkles, reflecting her light; the stars shone with more vivid scintillations; the blue heaven embraced all with a more intense depth—at least, they all appeared to do so, and to speak to me with a truer, a more divine eloquence of beauty, when Will was with me.

“I see, my dears, you wonder to hear me talk thus of him to you; but, should you ever become acquainted with such a spirit as this man’s, you will not

wonder at my enthusiasm towards a being, a communion with whom, doubles and trebles all human enjoyment."

Here Kit for a few moments seemed to be lost in his recollections (a habit the old mariner sometimes had), and then resumed.

"Our voyage continued prosperously, though our course was driven slightly northwards, which thus brought us within the danger of the terrible monsters Scylla and Charybdis, who keep their deadly watch on either side the Straits of Messina, to seize unhappy mariners who too unskilfully guide their vessels between these perilous enemies.

"We were fortunate enough to elude their fatal snares, but it was only by so near a chance, that most of us narrowly escaped the almost equally terrible lot of dying from fear. We heard the dismal baying of those fearful hounds that surround the person of Scylla; we beheld the cruel six necks which this fell monster darts forth to seize her prey, while, on the opposite side yawned the black throat of Charybdis, sucking in, with her insatiate draught, the dark boiling waters, and then disgorging them again, roaring and tumbling, in search for human victims to whirl within the dread abyss.

"Scarcely had we, in awe-struck silence, made our way strictly between these two fiend-like monsters, and had barely found time tremblingly to congratulate ourselves upon having safely cleared their relentless rocks and whirlpool, than we beheld a bevy of fair forms floating round and round our

ship, making courteous gestures to us, and charming all the air with their fascinating music. The sounds they uttered were ravishingly sweet, and were mingled in so celestial a harmony that I knew, at once, these potent musicians could be no other than the Sirens. Their singing and beckoning courtesy bewitched some of our crew into headlong self-abandonment, so that the poor fellows cast themselves rashly into their white arms, which lured them but to destruction; others, however, of our company escaped their wiles, through firmer principle or greater callousness of nature. The diamond merchant was fenced from all attacks, through eye and ear, that came not in the idolized shape of proffered wealth; his cousin, the captain, was proof against allurements that were only a reflex of pleasures which he had revelled in to satiety, in his former luxurious and prodigal course of life; and, as for myself, I had learned too well the true nature of these enchanting Sirens, from what I had gathered concerning them in my old conversations with the shipmates of my first voyage, to trust the seductive blandishments that now assailed my senses. In gazing upon their beauteous forms, I steadily kept in view the mead where I knew they sat encircled by dead men's bones, and through the entrancing strains which they sang, I listened perseveringly to the groans of their victims, ruthlessly slain, after being enticed by their treacherous music.

“Harassed by the dangers we had passed through, the poor remainder of our ship's company gave

themselves up to despondency and melancholy idleness, spending much of their time in sleep and listless apathy, when not absolutely engaged in working the vessel. One evening, while still pursuing our course along this romantic coast, I happened to be almost alone on deck, the steersman occupied solely with the management of his helm, and the diamond merchant absorbed in his money-dreams, when, on casting my eyes towards the shore, I beheld a gigantic shepherd figure, seated on a huge mass of rock, piping in the calm Sicilian sunshine, and gazing vacantly and sadly over the sea beyond the vine-clad trees and the weedy shore. His notes were melodious, though mournful, and his broken sentences, which were borne to me across the waters, came in passionate cadence as of wasting tenderness.

“O my white love, my Galatea! why avoid me for my one rugged brow and single eye? I cannot cease to love thee; my head and feet throb for very wretchedness! O Galatea! my white love!”

“The sounds melted sorrowfully, as our ship held on her way, but my heart long afterwards yearned towards that poor giant shepherd and his lonely lamenting ugliness.

“We landed at Alexandria, and reached Cairo without further adventure, and my acquaintance, the diamond merchant, was speedily engaged in the endeavour to effect the most lucrative sale of his precious stones. He expected to meet with a Jew here, with whom he hoped to make a good bargain, but we had some difficulty in finding the precise part

of the city in which he dwelt, and, during the merchant's search for his abode, he used every means in his power to detain me with him, as a sort of aid and protection.

“One morning, the merchant was pursuing his inquiries in a bazaar, and while he was cross-questioning a Jewish lad, whom he fancied could give him intelligence of the old Israelite he sought, I entertained myself with examining the various rich stuffs, brocades, silks, jewels, and other articles exposed here for sale. While the merchant went on talking,—for the lad seemed to hold back his information, either through caution or some other motive, and detained his questioner some time,—I noticed a curious figure, crouched beneath a sort of counter just by, who was employed in watching the diamond merchant, stealthily, but intently. The figure was nearly concealed by a heap of bright-coloured stuffs that lay there, so that at first I only saw a pair of black beady eyes, staring earnestly from among the pile of goods; but, by degrees, as his eagerness became more and more uncontrollable, two high cheek-bones appeared, then a face was thrust forth, then two skinny hands, and, at length, I could distinguish the whole figure of a singularly hideous being attired in dusky, time-stained garments, with a countenance as dingy as his apparel. Presently, catching my eye, and perceiving that it was upon him, the shrivelled, dusky figure suddenly withdrew beneath the heap of stuffs, and remained motionless. I kept my eye fixed upon the heap

however, and quietly approaching the spot where it lay, I directed a sharp kick right into the centre of the pile of stuffs, hoping to expose the stealthy watcher to public view. The stuffs fell asunder, indeed, but no figure was there to be seen beneath them, and so completely had all traces of a recently hidden person disappeared, that I could almost have believed the whole of what had passed to have been a delusion of my senses.

“Finding that the diamond merchant had, by this time, concluded his parley with the Jewish lad, I joined him, and we quitted the bazaar together. I was just about to mention the concealed figure I had remarked, when I recollected that it would only serve to alarm and agitate him needlessly, as there had been no harm done ; but I determined within myself that I would redouble my own care, and keep upon my guard for him. He now told me that he had, at last, discovered the man of whom we were in search, and that, as his dwelling was situated at some distance, in one of the remote suburbs of the city, we would repair thither at once. He indulged himself in a few golden visions, as we went along, descanting to me at length upon his hopes of disposing of the casket advantageously, and the large sum he hoped to realize by the sale. He said not one word of the purchases he intended to make with this sum, or of the new enjoyments he intended to obtain from them, so that I could hardly refrain from the thought that he, in fact, did but exchange one hard substance for another, and that he might,

for all real benefit that it brought him, just as well hoard up his diamonds as his gold money. But, like most lovers of mere wealth, he lived upon meagre fancies, instead of enjoying solid advantages, and contented himself with the power of obtaining good things, instead of the good things themselves.

“The old Jew’s abode was in an obscure, filthy quarter, where squalor and wretchedness dwelt side by side with ignorance and vice. As we entered a miserable blind alley, and knocked at the low doorway of the dirty decaying hovel where the Jew lived, I could not but feel this as another instance in point; here was a man, who probably possessed large store of riches, surrounding himself voluntarily with all the exteriors of poverty—darkness, filth, rags, and impure air.

“The door was opened by a bending old man, with a long, grizzly beard, and astute, twinkling eyes. He knew my companion at once, and bade him welcome, extending the greeting to me, when the diamond merchant introduced me as his kind friend and a most safe person. He led us along a dusty, dark passage, into a dim room, for though there was broad Egyptian sunshine out of doors, there was within the Israelite’s house, if not Egyptian darkness, at least Egyptian twilight, for all here was so obscure, that I could scarcely distinguish any of the objects, as I first entered. By degrees, however, my eyes became accustomed to this partial light, and I could perceive that there was great store of valuables, of many kinds,

in this miserable dim parlour, half sitting-room, half warehouse. The diamond merchant placed his precious casket upon the table in the centre of the room; its contents were displayed and valued, and, while he and the Jew pursued, in muttered whispers, their estimates, and calculations, and transacted the bargain between them, I had plenty of time to pursue my own thoughts, and to examine the various costly articles with which the room was thronged. Here lay a sword, with its richly jewelled handle and its polished damascene blade, inlaid with many an elaborate arabesque and filmy line of gold and blue steel; there were curiously wrought pistols, with silver mountings and inlayings; close to them was a fine set of cameos; and beyond lay an agate-headed dagger, a bracelet of carbuncles, and a girdle set with sapphires. Bronze figures, marble groups, chased goblets, alabaster vases, ebony cabinets, ivory crucifixes, gemmed crescents, and beaded rosaries, were heaped around, in heterogeneous profusion.

“My eyes were chiefly attracted, however, by a painting of the Madonna and child, which hung immediately opposite to me, and which seemed to be the production of some rare old master of Italy or Spain. As I gazed upon the divine affection irradiating that tender maternal face, and the infantine grace blended with grave intelligence and superhuman thought in the sweet babe’s countenance, I mused upon the strange chance which had brought that picture into the house of a Jew, and wondered whether any thought of the subsequent anguish

which was destined to wring that maternal heart had ever crossed the Israelite's mind, when the painting might chance to meet his eye. I glanced towards the old man, as I mused thus; but there was no thought but that of gain traced on that furrowed forehead, or in those sharp, calculating eyes. He led the diamond merchant towards a high desk, in one corner of the room, that the necessary receipt might be written, and the cash duly paid over, or drafts given to the amount, for the diamonds, which had been carefully replaced in the casket on the table.

“My eyes were recalled from the Jew and the merchant, by a passing shadow, a something that crossed the doorway of the dark passage by which we had entered. I had barely time to question myself as to what it might be, and to advance towards the casket protectively,—which I did rather from a kind of instinct, than with any direct purpose or apprehension,—when, in an instant, a dusky figure darted forward and seized the precious casket, retreating with it precipitately through the dark passage. I instantly rushed forward in pursuit, and perceived the same dusky figure dash through the outer doorway, through which I eagerly followed him, into the blind alley, along several streets, and out into the open country. I could now clearly see that the purloiner of the casket whom I was pursuing was the very same shrivelled, dusky, dingy-faced being whom I had discovered crouching in the bazaar that morning. He turned once, as we reached the banks of

the Nile, and grinned a ghastly smile of derision and malice, that made his face look more hideous than ever; but we soon crossed the river, and passed the long causeways erected over the flat land against the inundations, and still I kept up with him, the same distance as before. I did not gain upon him, it is true, but I did not lose ground.

“On we went, till we reached the burning plain of sand, where the pyramids raise their venerable forms in simple grandeur. Their gigantic sides glowed in the rich light of the setting sun, which clearly defined their colossal outlines, and shed a deep blood-red hue upon the extensive scene; slowly the fierce glare faded into the softer prismatic tints of yellow, green, azure and purple, and then night stole over the vast expanse around, while still the dusky figure made on before me, and still I steadily maintained my pursuit. As the gloom deepened, I perceived that a strange light, like that of a mephitic vapour, seemed to proceed from the head of the mysterious being before me, and, as the darkness still increased, the light became a lambent flame, issuing distinctly from his forehead, resting there, and casting a bright reflection upon his hideous countenance, as he turned it several times now towards me, as if in rage at my pertinacious pursuit. Each time that he turned it towards me, it seemed to assume additional hideousness, and to become more shrivelled, more brown, and less human; until, at last, as we rapidly approached close to the pyramids, his dreadful face glared upon me in the full undisguised horror of an exhumed

mummy! But I was not deterred from my resolve of following him by the frightful conviction that flashed upon me that he was no inhabitant of this earth; should he even lead me to the dismal abode where he and his buried companions lie entombed, yet still I determined I would not relinquish my hope of regaining what I considered as having been left in my especial charge. I believed I had a duty to perform, which no selfish fear ought to prevent me from endeavouring to accomplish, even at the risk of life; and, accordingly, when I beheld the mummy rush towards the entrance of one of the pyramids, I boldly nerved my heart, and dashed impetuously after him. The lambent flame which played on his forehead sufficiently tracked his course, and I still pursued the still advancing dusky figure. Through long galleries, labyrinthine passages, excavations both narrow and steep, flat landing-places, occasional square chambers, up rude steps, down others, and along wider and longer galleries, I followed the flame which indicated to me the flight of the spoliator, and we stopped not until we came to a portal of granite, which, after a moment's pause, opened, and disclosed a large apartment, in the centre of which stood a royal sarcophagus. I followed closely the dusky figure, who no sooner entered the apartment, than he knelt before the sarcophagus in which lay a mummy swathed in kingly robes, and depositing the stolen casket at the feet of his royal master, he dropped rigidly and mutely amid a range of recumbent mummies that surrounded the tomb of their sovereign. I was springing forward to possess

myself of the casket, when I was arrested by beholding the figure of the royal mummy slowly and majestically arise, and then it spoke in a deep, sonorous voice, which echoed strangely through that palace of tombs:—

“ ‘Tis not for the royal blood of Egypt to detain treasure unjustly obtained, and justly reclaimed. It was the act of a devoted, though misguided, slave, to seize what might enrich the monument of his master ; but that master disdains to reserve what is re-demanded by courage and fidelity. Take, then, the casket ; restore it to its rightful owner ; and believe that Cheops can admire bravery and firm adherence to duty beyond all the treasures of the universe. Be it the task of my slave, in punishment of his misdeed, to guide thee, mortal, back to the light of day, and the realm of existence. Farewell !’

“ The royal mummy sank back in the sarcophagus, and resumed his sleep of ages ; whilst the dusky figure of the mummy-slave once more arose, and displayed the lambent flame to re-conduct me through the pyramid. That this complaisance was the mere result of obedience to the behest of his royal master I could perceive from the scowl which distorted his withered face as he turned to precede my steps. But I cared little for his displeasure while secure of his sovereign’s protection. As I again threaded the long galleries and granite passages, I recalled to memory a legend of the royal Cheops, which I had once heard recounted on board the ship in which I first sailed, by a Mrs. Jane Flower, the wife of a great naturalist,

who was going abroad on a voyage of botanical discovery ; she had told us a strange story of a mummy, which my recent adventure brought into my mind ; but while I was pondering over the circumstance, the lambent flame stood still. I found I was close to the door of egress, and as it opened, the dusky figure disappeared within the recesses of the pyramid, and I saw him no more.

“Morning dawned as I emerged from the aged edifice, and my spirit rose to meet the glorious freedom of the open air. I inhaled the gracious breath of heaven as it was wafted gently beneath the group of sycamores and palm trees, held sacred by the Arabs, which cast their welcome shade near this spot. The leaves in their unscathed beauty, and vivid green colour, looked doubly welcome amid this sandy plain, and seemed part of the pleasant freshness of early day. My senses were excited by the delicious feeling of liberty and successful exertion, and I could almost have fancied that I heard that ancient Theban head breathing its morning music from lips of stone, and that the resonant hymn was wafted along the waters of old Nile to the spot where I stood offering my own humble song of prayer and thanksgiving.

“I made the best of my way to Cairo, but it was some time past noon when I arrived at the caravansera, where the diamond merchant and I had taken up our abode. I hoped to find him in our apartment, but he was absent ; and I learned shortly after, that he was busily engaged in seeking me, as

he believed that I had absconded with his property. I felt outraged at this belief of his, as it proved to me that no services could win him from entertaining unworthy suspicions even of his closest associates. I determined, however, to await his arrival, knowing that he would most probably return to sleep at the caravansera; and then, after having delivered the precious casket into his hands, I would immediately take my departure, and quit his companionship for ever.

“With the close of evening, the diamond merchant returned to our lodging, and great was his surprise to find me seated there quietly awaiting his arrival. He was about to reproach me bitterly, on seeing his precious casket in my hands; but when I gave it to him, bidding him see that it was safe, and its contents untouched, he stopped short, and stammered some awkward excuses and apologies for having wronged me. I turned from him: and when he would have questioned me concerning the abstraction of the casket, and how I had succeeded in recovering it from the thief, I shortly bade him be contented that he had it safely once more within his own keeping; then, advising him to treat his future friends less mistrustfully, I wished him farewell, and quitted him abruptly. I very soon after left the caravansera altogether; and in the one where I took up my lodging I met with a sea-captain, who was about to depart in a few days for Venice. I agreed to go with him, as I had long wished to visit that beautiful city of the sea. I thought, too, that when I arrived

there, I would afterwards indulge myself with a few wanderings inland, and, in order to be able to do so, I resolved to sell one of the diamonds in the setting of Eudora's locket, as she had bid me do, should I ever need money. I bethought me of the old Jew, and went to his squalid house, that he might give me the worth of the gem. He valued it at a sum equal to about five-and-twenty pounds, and I, who had not expected so much, being quite ignorant of the value of precious stones, almost regretted that I had not sold more of the diamonds, of which there were sixteen in all, surrounding the crystal locket. However, I recollected that they were in a much more portable shape in their present form, and I sat cogitating thus, while the Jew went to fetch me the money. Presently I heard sobs and stifled weeping in the inner apartment, as of some one in deep distress; then I heard a voice say in passionate accents—

“ ‘ Save him, Isaac, save him! you can if you will. Pay but the money—a small sum to you—with your heaps of wealth. Pay the money for me, and my boy—my beautiful boy—may still be saved! Think of his young innocence sacrificed—perhaps his life hereafter a forfeit! O pay it, and save him! Save me!’ ”

“ I could hear the woman throw herself on her knees in an agony of entreaty; then followed whispers of encouragement, a sound as of a heavy purse of gold, wild tears and thanks, a quick retreating step, and in a few moments more, the old Jew came forth with the five-and-twenty pounds for me, but not be-

fore I had heard him mutter:—‘Poor young thing, she is but a mere child herself, Heaven help her!’ I saw the tears standing in his old eyes, though they soon resumed their habitual cunning expression, and look of careful covetousness. I quitted him full of thought about human inconsistency, and wondering whether any touch of the sympathy which had prompted his charitable succour to the distressed mother, had owed its well-spring to the daily sight of the divine Madonna and child, so rarely pictured in his treasure-room.

“Prosperous gales speeded us on our passage up the blue Adriatic, and wafted us along the eastern shores of beautiful Italy, when, one lovely day some time after I had bid adieu to Egypt, I found myself in sight of Venice, with her streets of water, her magnificent churches, her decayed glories, her ever-living associations, and immortal beauty.

“But you will be expected home by this time, I dare say,” said the old mariner, interrupting himself; “so off with you, Dick, my hero! Good night to you, and my dear lass, Fanny!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE PIGEONS OF ST. MARK.—THE PHANTOM GONDOLA, AND
THE DOOMED MAN.—BARBARA.—THE HARZ FOREST.—THE
BROCKEN MOUNTAIN.—KARL.—LEOPOLD.

“WELL now, Kit, tell us what you did first, when you got to Venice;” said the young Swallows, on the following evening.

“Why, the very first thing I did was to hire a boat, that I might row myself about wherever I wished in this wonderful city, where the streets are all water,” said Kit; “for I was determined to give myself a holiday for a time, and see all that was to be seen. So I paddled my gondola about nearly all day long, soon getting practised in the use of the one oar that is used there, and becoming speedily accustomed to the narrow confined alleys of water between the houses, and the sharp corners round which I had to turn, uttering at the same time the low warning cry which I heard used by the gondoliers to prevent collision.

“In these luxurious wanderings I saw many beautiful churches, adorned with all the richest splendour of art; I beheld the picturesque old palaces of the ancient nobles, with their marble steps leading from the stately portal into the very water; the busy,

close-thronged bridge of the Rialto, ringing with many voices of eager buyers and sellers; the gay and ever-shifting scene of the grand canal; the silent, shut-in, smaller ones, and the lonely waters of the lagunes.

“I beheld Venice under all her beauteous aspects; brilliant, sparkling, and animated, amid sunshine and daylight; calm, silent, and impressive, beneath the placid beams of the moon, as I rowed far out upon the still waters, and contemplated the fair city by night.

“One sultry day, I sought relief from the glare of the noontide waters, and lounged on the shady side of the Piazza of St. Mark, indulging myself with that necessary Italian luxury, an ice. I sat long idling on a wooden bench, belonging to one of the coffee-houses there, letting the cool fruity delicacy glide pleasantly over my palate, while I admired the barbaric magnificence of the showy cathedral; and now and then amused myself with breaking off small morsels of the *focaccia*, or small bun, which is served with the ice, and throwing them to the pigeons, who flock in great numbers on that spot, and are regarded with veneration and traditional respect by the Venetians. These birds are carefully fed daily at two o'clock precisely; and, at the very first stroke of the hour, as it peals from the neighbouring bell-tower, these sagacious little creatures congregate, and present themselves at the various windows of the surrounding houses, whence their quotidian meal is scattered to them.

“I was engaged watching the various groups of these eager little birds, with their blue and mottled plumage and their pattering red feet trotting importantly hither and thither as they bustled now here, now there, to pick up some particularly attractive grain, as the major part of the corn became swept from the window-sills to the pavement beneath, when my attention was attracted by seeing a single pigeon still clinging pertinaciously before one of the higher windows, at which he pecked and fluttered as if desiring to be let in. Presently I saw the window opened by a young girl, who took the pigeon to her bosom and caressed it. As well as I could judge, from the height at which I saw her face, it appeared to me to be very pretty. She fed the tame little creature from her hand, stroked its glossy feathers, kissed its sudden-darting head, and played a thousand little fondling tricks with it; at last making it take a piece of the grain from between her own rosy lips. The bird seemed well pleased to be so caressed, for, with the exception of the quick restless motion of its neck and head, it remained quite still within her hands, as she pressed it against her bosom.

“I sat watching this pretty picture of the girl and the bird for some time, till I saw the former give a slight wave of her hand, when the pigeon immediately darted away, and flew straight from the window across the opposite houses of the square. The girl watched it for a moment eagerly, then, drawing down the window, I could see her no longer. Several days following, I watched at the same hour and

the same place, and each day I saw the same fondling pass between the girl and the bird,—she watching its departure, as if it were a messenger between her and some absent friend. But I saw no billet attached beneath its wing, no evidence of its bearing any communication from its pretty mistress—it was only from her manner that I could guess the pigeon was the bearer of interesting intelligence.

“One night, I was straying late among the noisy crowd that congregates every evening on the Piazza of St. Mark, making that only space of land in the watery city look like a vast glaring ball-room, with a starry sky overhead instead of a gilded ceiling. I felt as if so much noise and glare were an annoyance rather than an exhilaration to me, and the scene misplaced among so much beauty; so, quitting the gay throng of revellers, who were streaming to and fro listening to the various bands that were playing all at once, amid the din of ice-glasses, coffee-cups, chattering women, bustling waiters, sweetmeat-sellers crying their wares, loud men, laughing, singing, bantering, jesting, and talking opera, I betook myself to my boat that was lying off the quay of the Piazzetta, and I rowed far away upon the silent waters that lay in silvery placidity beneath the moon and her attendant stars, which shone out in all the refulgent beauty of an Italian night.

“Here I rowed for some hours, forgetting sleep in the calm enjoyment of this quiet solitude, until at length I felt a slight chill from the midnight breeze’

which reminded me to return to the city and seek warmer repose.

“Just as this shudder crept over me, and I was preparing to obey its dictates by rowing back to Venice, I perceived at a little distance from me upon the water, a small gondola, with its usual hearse-like black awning, gliding along slowly, though without a rower.

“That there was some person in the boat, however, I could not doubt, for a sound issued from the mournful awning as of one sitting beneath in bitter anguish. Sobs and deep groans, as if wrested from the unwilling chest of manly sorrow, that ever seeks to forbid itself such feminine relief, burst forth in frightful vehemence, and reached my ear with a force that terrified me. I felt as though all human consolation must be unavailing to such profound grief and despair, and while I paused, awe-struck, I beheld a man spring out of the gondola and cast himself headlong into the lagune. Reproaching myself for my hesitation, I prepared to row to his assistance, but, on casting my eyes once more in the direction where I had beheld him throw himself out of the boat, the gondola itself had disappeared, and no trace of man or bark was to be seen. All had vanished, like breath from a polished mirror, and I was entirely alone upon the broad lagune.

“I felt my heart pause, and my breathing suspended, as I rowed towards land, and it was not until the return of next morning’s sun, with the cheerful influences and reviving thoughts of awakened day,

that I could rally from the impression that had been left upon me by the mysterious vision of the past night.

“I did not feel tempted to go upon the water that day; I strolled among the arcades of the Piazza; I examined the shops and looked at the new prints; I saw the two bronze figures on the summit of the curious blue and gold clock that bears the signs of the Zodiack, hammer each passing hour on their huge bell—and twice beheld the mimic procession of the three kings, preceded by a trumpeter dazzling in gold and red, who issue from a portion of this same wonderful clock every third hour, and pay their homage to the infant Saviour and his mother, who sit there in effigy; I watched the flocking pigeons, as they varied their picking and feeding, with wheeling flights and aërial soarings; I saw them come punctually to their daily repast as the clock struck; I saw the pretty maiden fondle her favourite bird from the high window, and speed him away on his errand—if errand it really were; and, in short, I exhausted all the few land resources that Venice possesses to a wanderer like myself. When night came, however, I could refrain no longer from the smooth water, the gliding boat, and the fresh cool air. But I did not row towards the lagune. I could not do that; so I guided myself to and fro through the narrow canals, musing upon the pride and magnificence of the old Venetian nobles—their lordly sway—their merchant power—their maritime dominion—their patrician tyranny—their cruel policy—as I glided beneath the decaying walls of their ancient palaces, that spoke

eloquent truths of departed grandeur, and self-evident reasons for instability and downfall.

“As I silently passed beneath the Bridge of Sighs, I looked up between the frowning walls of contiguous palace and prison, where so much wrong and suffering had been inflicted and endured; I looked up towards the sky, intensely blue and gemmed with stars, and felt how hopefully a better future arose for Italy over the blind and arrogant misrule of her past ages. At that moment I was struck by the same sounds of woe and anguish that had reached my ear on the previous night amid the wide waters of the lagune, and close beside the low murky portal whence the bodies of strangled prisoners were wont to be carried forth, at dead of night, in the old bygone times, I beheld the black gondola with its solitary inmate uttering his heart-rending lamentation.

“I would have approached; but the boat suddenly shot past me, and glided swiftly away in the distance. Its motion was so abrupt as it darted close to my gondola, that I felt sure it must be shivered in the collision; but, as the swart bark rushed by, I was sensible of no greater shock than if a raven's wing had swept the side.

“I was greatly appalled by this mysterious gondola, and would have given much to penetrate its dark secrets, as well as to learn the cause of its inmate's anguish, and, if possible, to assuage his throes,—but how to effect this?—how to seek communion with a being who eluded all observation, and who baffled all conjecture as to his identity?

“I felt haunted by the vision of this unhappy sufferer, and could not prevent my thoughts from hovering uneasily round the subject, though conscious that I could do little by harassing myself with surmises and fruitless anxiety.

“On the following day, I threw myself into the society of the gondoliers and sea-faring men who usually congregate on the quay of the Piazzetta, beneath the granite pillar which supports the winged lion of St. Mark; for I felt that company and cheerful intercourse with my fellow-man would do more than anything to dispel the haunting solicitude and unwholesome dwelling upon one painful subject, which was fast taking possession of me, and might produce the ill effects of a diseased imagination.

“I found these gondoliers a good-humoured, pleasant set of fellows, with that frank cordiality of manner that distinguishes the poorer classes among Italians. They laughed and chatted, and freely admitted me to their conversation, helping me out with my bad Italian, and making light of the mistakes I made, with a genial courtesy which, I fear, is far rarer among us English, when foreigners speak our language badly. They were all, just then, bantering one of their companions, a handsome young gondolier, named Antonio, about his being in love. They said they were sure he was, because he sighed often, was sometimes lost in thought, and tied on his neck handkerchief with a smart air. And yet, they said, the fellow was so sly, and kept his secret so carefully, that no one had ever seen his sweetheart.

“ ‘ Is it Bianca, the pretty water-carrier? or Cecchina, the grape-seller? or Maria? or Nina? or who?’—they insisted on his naming her.

“ But Antonio only shook his head and smilingly said—

“ ‘ None of them all; I love none but this bird,’ he added, as one of the pigeons of St. Mark flew down and settled upon his shoulder. His companions laughed loud and long, as he caressed and fondled the bird, joining in their laugh good-humouredly; while I could not help fancying I had found the solution of the enigma which had puzzled me about the girl and the bird, and that I had now discovered the object of the love-messages despatched by means of the pigeon.

“ Not long after this, I found an opportunity of questioning Antonio as to the truth of my suspicions, and he owned that they were correct.

“ The young girl was the daughter of a rich tradesman, who kept a jeweller’s shop beneath one of the arcades of the Piazza St. Mark; the father of the maiden had forbidden the union of the lovers, until Antonio should have earned a certain sum, and proved himself worthy of his mistress by constancy during a probationary term of separation; they had hit upon this expedient for lessening the pains of absence, and his mistress had taught the bird to fly to and fro between them, carrying the bliss of communion on its downy pinions.

“ ‘ In caressing its pretty plumage,’ Antonio simply said, in conclusion, ‘ I have the pleasure of passing

my hand over the feathers that have so lately been pressed and smoothed by her gentle touch.'

"I was interested and pleased with this slight history of the two lovers—these two human pigeons of St. Mark—and felt that it was quite in keeping with the romantic graceful nature of the Italians, who possess an innate elevation and love of the beautiful, which formerly sprang to life through the creative genius of their great artists—both musicians and painters.

"In the evening, as I did not feel disposed to get into my gondola, I withdrew from the noisy crowded Piazza, and wandered along the outer galleries of the ducal palace, hanging from its stone balconies over towards the water, and inhaling the fresh sea-breeze that came wafted across from beyond the Lido. Nightfall came on, yet still I lingered; I loitered in the quadrangular court-yard of stone, that forms the centre of the building. I looked into the two wells that are here, whence the female water-carriers, with their bare feet and singular costume, are exclusively privileged to draw the water. I gazed upon the colossal figures standing in warlike dignity on the landing-place of the Giants' stair-case, where I beheld in fancy the disgraced doge, Marino Faliero, descend with steps that trembled from age alone, and baring his head of the ducal cap, submit to his doom of decapitation. I saw the grey-haired head roll down those pitiless stone steps, amid the equally pitiless and stony Council of Ten, who stood around to see their behest executed.

“Suddenly I heard the anguished accents of the unhappy being I had twice before met during the night, and, raising my eyes, I beheld him seated on the uppermost steps of the Giants’ Stair-case, with his face buried in his hands and his body bent forward upon his knees. Again those piteous sobs and deep groans thrilled me with pity and terror; softly I approached the stair-case and began to ascend towards the sufferer; but when I reached the landing-place, half way up, he raised his head, and waving to me mournfully, he bade me remain there and come no nearer on peril of my life.

“‘I know the motive which leads you to me—but all aid, all comfort, is of no avail,’ said he, in deep unearthly tones; ‘I am beyond all human succour, as I am beyond a higher mercy. Consolation is not for grief like mine; and crimes such as I have committed deserve retribution, not forgiveness. Condemned as I am by Heaven’s justice, I submit though I deplore, too fortunate if submission and humility may in time win a mitigation of my doom. What this fearful doom is, you now shall know, for thrice have you crossed my path—thrice in your heart have offered sympathy—and generous sympathy is too precious to be thrice offered in vain. Yours has won this much; I am permitted to tell you my fearful story, and inform you what is the punishment awarded to my guilt.’

“I trembled with awe; the doomed man resumed—

“‘In the time when Venice had her Doge and her Council of Ten; when the state prisons were throug-

ed, and the midnight death-dealing permitted; when the patricians were all-powerful, and no man was safe from the secret denunciation of his neighbour; at that time, in short, when the dread Lion's mouth played its awful part in State policy, and none knew who next might be its victim,—I dwelt, a living Venetian, and moved here in the flesh, as I now do in the spirit, among my fellow-citizens. I was poor, for I was improvident; I was base and selfish, for I pursued the dictates of my animal nature, at the sacrifice of all that was good and noble. To indulge my propensity for idle dissipation, I at first recklessly squandered the small means I carried with me from the paternal roof, which I quitted in disgust at its restraint and virtuous parsimony; and, when that little was gone, I resorted to vice to supply me with fresh indulgence. In fraudulent play, in treacherous theft, I was an adept; and not unfrequently has this hand been hired to plunge the assassin's poniard, and deal the deputed death-blow that was to feed my employer's revenge. A fruitful source of revenue, too, was found in stealthily dropping the secret denunciations of some timid but rich patron, into the fateful Lion's mouth, which conveyed the alleged offence to the knowledge of the State.

“One terrible day, I had deposited one of these accusing papers within the stone jaws, and was revelling in the purchase-money of my treachery, when I suddenly learned (by singular means, and doubtless through the interposition of wrathful Providence, who willed that such crime should meet its

awful chastisement), that the victim of my impeachment was no other than my own young brother, Lorenzo! Virtuous and brave, he had already won honourable fame in serving the wars of his country, and had lately returned, flushed with success, to claim the gentle bride that awaited him. But his betrothed had been seen, and marked as his prey, by one of our powerful patricians, who hit upon the expedient of a state arrest to rid himself of a troublesome rival. He had availed himself of my hireling hand to drop the arraigning paper which was to condemn a brother! I heard the whole terrible truth—my own innocent brother was to fall by the hands of the midnight executioner—his strangled corpse would be conveyed in a sack from the dungeon, and cast away to rot in slime and weeds beneath the dark waters, while his still more wretched bride, was flung hopelessly into the grasp of her destroyer.

“So much accumulated horror, the work of my own guilt, struck deep to the heart of even so very a miscreant as myself, and, mad with remorse, I rushed forth, to gain oblivion and death amid the wide waters of the lagoon. But not thus was the retribution due to my iniquity destined to cease. Avenging justice condemned me to a more enduring punishment. Each revolving year, as the season renews the anniversary when my crimes reached their fatal climax, and wrought the sacrifice of two innocent victims, together with my own suicide, I am doomed to re-enact, for three successive nights, the frightful part I played in life, haunting the scenes of

my former villany, and washing with repentant tears the traces of my past guilt. Here, on this spot, in the neighbourhood of the lion's mouth, so long fanged by human venom, am I condemned to endure hours of torture in listening to the accusing murmurs that issue thence, to appal and overwhelm me with echoes of my victims' sufferings, their groans, their cries, and their appeals for vengeance. There, beneath the Bridge of Sighs, close beside that dismal archway, that disgorged its still warm corpse fresh from the strangling hands of the midnight executioner—there, where my innocent brother had his brave young spirit abruptly quenched, and his still quivering limbs were thrust forth shrouded only by a sack, to be plunged ruthlessly into an unmarked watery grave, there, in that foul lurking-place must I linger, and annually recall the whole revolting circumstances of the cruel tragedy. And, yet more, at the still hour of new-born day, amid the lonely waste of waters of the wide lagune, it is my destiny again to madden fiercely with the sense of sharp remorse, to writhe beneath its unavailing pangs, and, stung by despair, once more to plunge into the eternal unrest of suicide.'

“The unhappy being wrung his hands wildly, and arose from his seat, as if summoned by some super-human power; then, gliding along the stone gallery, he disappeared at the angle of the building; and, though I could not help following quickly, yet, when I reached the outer balcony that leads from the gallery along which he had passed, I could see no traces

of the spectre—excepting that, out upon the waters of the lagune, beyond the quay, I could distinguish amid the silver ripples of the reflected moonbeams a solitary gondola, pursuing its phantom course unimpelled, unsteered, while a mournful sound of lamentation lingered faintly in its dark wake.

“Next day I bade adieu to Venice, queen of earthly cities—lovelier in her decay than they in their flourishing prosperity, and wandered forth on my proposed land pilgrimage. I lingered in quiet, picturesque Verona; indulged myself with a day’s rest in charming terrace-built Bergamo; loitered by the exquisite shores of lakes Lecco and Como; and spent some brilliant moonlight hours in the romantic old town of Chiavenna among the mountains. But how may I find words to express my emotions on finding myself at sunrise among the lofty peaks of the Alps! How was my heart thrilled with awe-stricken admiration, and my soul elevated towards the great Creator, as I made my way through the natural aisles and transepts of this, his loftiest earthly temple! To how infinitely small a point did they cause all human temples to shrink in the comparison. Man has erected the noble cathedral of Milan, resplendent with every conceivable decoration of art, and profuse in every effort of mortal ingenuity—but what is even that superb edifice, raised in its marble brilliancy against the blue sky, compared with the eternal majesty of the snow-clad glaciers, rearing their sublime heights amid the solitude of Nature, towards the azure presence of God himself? It was on

the summit of the lofty Splugen that I felt my spirit dilate in aspirations, such as no temple built by merely human hands had ever created within me, and I pursued my path, through the stupendous passes and gigantic ravines of the Via Mala, in adoration and heartfelt devotion towards the beneficent Father who conducts the humblest of his creatures above the roaring torrent and beneath the thundering avalanche in safety and trusting gratitude.

“I wandered through a great part of Switzerland and Germany, avoiding, as much as possible, populous cities and the more beaten tracks of travellers, for scenes more congenial with my romantic and adventurous disposition, so that I am able to tell you little concerning the more prominent features of the countries I passed through on my continental pilgrimage. One evening, I found myself in the vicinity of the Brocken Mountain, that lies on the borders of the Harz Forest, and among the mines, that there yield their abundant treasure of ore. I had been walking far that day, and had begun to feel very weary, when, just as I was thinking of asking a meal and a night's shelter at the next miner's hut I should come to, I heard a voice singing, so softly and sweetly, that I involuntarily checked my steps, that I might not interrupt so gentle a strain. From the spot where I stood, I could catch a glimpse of the singer, and I remained perfectly still to look at her and listen. She was a young girl of about sixteen or seventeen years of age, and

was seated at the door of a rude cottage, where she plied her knitting needles, that sparkled and glittered in the rays of the setting sun and twinkled beneath her active fingers. On her calm features and soft blue eyes there sat a modest expression of humility and sweetness that was touchingly beautiful, and, as she now and then raised the drooping lids, and cast her eyes upwards in the supplication of her song, which was a vesper hymn to the Virgin, there was a fervour of ecstasy and a beaming rapture on her countenance, that irradiated her with a saint-like holy look, that made me feel as if I gazed upon a beatific vision.

“Her devout melody ceased; yet still I gazed, remaining apart, as if my human presence were an intrusion; but the last faint echoes of her tones died away, and I heard the slight clicking sound of her busy needles, which recalled me to earth-born thoughts. I approached, quietly and reverentially raising my hat as I passed on, thinking merely to allow myself a nearer glance at her fair countenance, but she arose, and dropped me a little curtsey, with so artless a simplicity and a look of candour and kindness so winning in its frank unembarrassed cordiality, that I found courage to crave a draught of water.

“She fetched me some, with the alacrity of youth and goodness, and, as she gave it to me, said she wished it had been *gose*,* for my sake.

“‘But we are too poor to afford ourselves beer,’

* The beer of that country, which is celebrated for its excellence.

she added with a smile ; ‘ and, by the blessed Virgin’s help, water refreshes the parched throat even better, I think.’

“ I thanked her for her kind words, still more than for her refreshment, and entreated her to indulge me with yet another draught, that I might enjoy the pleasure of staying the longer near her gentle face and sweet voice. At length I withdrew, thinking of her beauty, and wondering that I had not ventured to beg hospitality at her cottage, instead of wending further on that night in search of a night’s lodging. But, I know not how it was, she inspired me with more respect even than admiration, and I felt as if I could as soon have asked the Queen of Hanover for an apartment in her palace, as that simple girl for shelter, that might perhaps be inconvenient for her to bestow upon me. And so indeed it proved that it would have been ; for the good miner and his wife who gave me leave to sleep in their hut that night, not very far distant from the cottage where I had seen the young girl, informed me that she and her brother lived with their father, a rough miner, who treated his children harshly, and would, in all probability, have rendered it impossible for his daughter to have given me the hospitality I sought.

“ Next day, I could not refrain from lingering about the cottage, in the hope of again seeing the sweet girl who had interested me so powerfully. From the spot where I had stood listening to her hymn on the previous evening, I could see well, without myself being seen, and here I obtained

several glimpses of her during the morning, as she flitted to and fro in the cottage, attending to her various household duties, making the home of her father and brother neat and comfortable. In the evening, I had again the delight of listening to her lovely voice, pouring forth its exquisite tones in praise and thanksgiving, but there was something in her gentle purity that prevented my addressing her again, for I felt still that there was a sort of impertinence in intruding myself upon her, unsought and probably undesired. Methought I wanted some occasion where my presence could be useful or my aid needful to this innocent saint-like being, to warrant my approach.

“This occasion presented itself sooner than I could have expected, or, indeed, wished, for I already learned to prefer her peace and happiness to my own gratification.

“I ought to mention that I had made an agreement with the worthy miner and his wife that I should pay them for the use of the small room which they could afford to let me have out of the narrow space there was for themselves and their large family of children in the hut they inhabited, and, under pretence of wishing to explore the mines in the vicinity, I was enabled thus to linger in a spot so interesting to me.

“One evening, I had been detained rather later than usual, by a visit I had paid to a neighbouring mine, in order to give colour to my pretext, and, on repairing to the nook where I pursued my concealed

watching, I found I had out-stayed the hour of the vesper hymn, and I had scarcely regretted this, ere I was seized with far deeper regret, on seeing the gentle singer herself issue from the cottage door, in tears.

“She was accompanied by a coarse, ill-favoured man, whom, from all I had heard from my host and hostess, I had no difficulty in guessing at once to be her father. From amidst the thick, grizzly mat of hair which formed his moustachios and beard there hung a pipe, that sent up clouds of smoke over his hard, disagreeable features, while he flung himself upon the seat his daughter had occupied the first evening I had seen her. She now stood meekly before him, her hands folded on her breast and her tears falling fast, while he sat puffing away, and growling roughly, as he said,—

“‘Listen to me, girl, and mark well my words. I am determined I will not be thwarted any longer by that idle, wilful young dog, your brother. He has too long had his own way, and lost his time with a parcel of idle fancies that are only fit to fill his head with nonsense and prevent his becoming a good hard-working miner, like his father and his grandfather before him. Who’s he? Who’s Karl? I should like to know, that he’s to set himself up above his honest forefathers, and pretend to be a gentleman, forsooth?’

“The soft voice of his daughter here interposed, with—

“‘Indeed, father, Karl has no thought of becoming

a gentleman or desiring to be better than yourself, he only wishes—'

" 'He only wishes—he only wishes,' broke in the man with an angry growl; 'don't tell me, girl. I know very well that Karl despises a miner's life, and sighs to go abroad and make a fool of himself; and I don't choose that he shall—do you hear, Barbara? I choose that he shall stay at home and gain an honest livelihood by working in the mines by my side. I choose that he shall remain with me, as you are so soon to leave me, girl. So tell him that, Barbara, and tell him that I will be obeyed,—do you mind,—or he shall rue it bitterly.'

"So saying, the man arose, and seizing his fur cap, he flung from his daughter, heedless of her sorrow, and walked away, muttering, growling, clenching his hands, and frowning fiercely.

"Poor Barbara dropped upon the seat he had just quitted, and buried her face in her hands.

"The sight of her distress and her sisterly sorrow, inspired me with boldness, in the hope of relieving them, so I crept to her side, and, gently drawing away the hand, wet with tears that crept through the slender fingers, I said,—

" 'Tell me what I can do to help you, Barbara.'

"She looked surprised, but not so much so as might, perhaps, have been expected, for she only said,—

" 'The blessed Virgin sends me a kind voice to comfort me, and a manly arm to aid me. I remember you,' she added, gazing into my face with a simple

earnestness as remote from freedom as it was from the usual bashful regard with which girls of her age usually meet a stranger's look ; 'you received a draught of water at my hands the other evening with a kindly warmth of thanks that bespoke your own grateful heart rather than the value of the gift.'

" 'Tell me if I can render you better than thanks, in the shape of help, Barbara,' I replied ; for I felt suddenly relieved from my sense of respect and distance, by her frank unembarrassed manner, as well as by my hope of being useful to her.

" 'Yes, I think you can help me,' she said ; 'and it would be doing injustice to your generous kindness, no less than to the aid vouchsafed to me by the blessed Mother of Heaven, who has doubtless sent you to me in my distress, did I fail to unfold my griefs to you, or refuse to avail myself of your offered assistance.'

" Barbara then related to me her little history. She told me how her brother had ever shewn a disinclination for a miner's drudgery, and had frequently exasperated their father by declaring his intention of quitting this life of slavery, as soon as he should be old enough to free himself. She said Karl had early shewn a talent for drawing, and raved perpetually of his longing to become an artist, and of his determination to wander some day to Italy, that he might study there. That he spent all his leisure time in sketching and drawing on the walls of their huts with pieces of chalk or coloured earth, and that he incurred their father's frequent displeasure by losing

his time in this way, and in wandering among the neighbouring mountains on moonlight nights, when he ought, their father said, to be sleeping soundly and gaining rest and strength for next day's labour.

“‘But,’ continued Barbara, her voice trembling and her face becoming agitated, ‘I sometimes, of late, fear that there is more in these night ramblings of Karl’s than mere searching after scenery and subjects for his sketches, for he grows thin, and his lips are parched, and his hand is hot and burning, and his eyes are hollow and fixed, and he looks very very ill; and, indeed, I sometimes fancy,’ and here Barbara’s voice sunk to a timid whisper, ‘do you know, I really sometimes fancy that my poor Karl is under some spell. I have heard father Peter describe just such symptoms in people who are haunted by the evil spirit. Heaven send that my dear brother holds no intercourse with the fiends and demons of the neighbouring Harz forest.’

“‘And who is father Peter?’ I asked.

“‘Our confessor, at the convent hard by,’ replied Barbara.

“I endeavoured to encourage her, by arguing, as well as I could, on the improbability of her brother’s being under any such influence, but the words of her ghostly father, together with her sisterly fears, had produced too strong an impression on Barbara’s enthusiastic nature to be effectively combated by the few suggestions I could offer.

“She led me into the cottage, and shewed me the chalk drawings and sketches with which the walls

had been literally covered by her brother's hand, and from the little judgment I was able to form upon such a matter, they appeared to me to indicate great power and truth to nature. I was sorry that a lad who felt within himself a desire to rise above a sordid pursuit and a conviction of his own talent to carry into effect this aspiration, should be chained and withheld from his endeavour to soar. But my thoughts were suddenly recalled from the contemplation of the young artist's productions, by the recollection of a few words that her father had uttered.

“ ‘What did your father mean, Barbara, by saying that he chose Karl to remain with him, as you were so soon to leave him?’ ” asked I, abruptly.

“ ‘When I was about a twelvemonth old,’ answered Barbara, ‘my mother had a dangerous illness, and she vowed that, if she were permitted to recover, she would dedicate her little daughter to the service of the Virgin, in the convent of St. Barbara close by, when the child should have reached the age of seventeen. My mother recovered from that illness, although she sunk beneath another which she had four years after; but my father adheres to the fulfilment of her vow, and knows that I am to enter my noviciate on my seventeenth birthday, which will fall in a week's time.’ ”

“I felt that I turned deadly pale; but I put a firm control on my emotion, when I perceived the calm, hopeful, saintlike expression on Barbara's countenance, which betokened how entirely her own de-

voted enthusiasm led her to rejoice in the vocation to which her mother's will had consigned her.

“Meanwhile, Barbara, wrapt solely in the thought of her brother's welfare, told me that she had overheard Karl mutter to himself bitter words that very morning, when goaded by their father's expressly forbidding him to think of any other life than the miner's; adding tauntingly—

“‘Besides, how can a poor lad like you ever hope to scrape money enough to take you away from this place? No, no; stay where I bid you, Karl, or it shall be the worse for you!’

“And the words which Barbara had overheard her brother mutter were—

“‘I will perish rather! so I must keep my appointment in the forest this night, come what will of it!’

“She then said that she had determined at all risks to watch her brother, and to follow him if she found he left the cottage during the night.

“‘I need not fear the darkness,’ she added, ‘the Blessed Virgin will protect me through the forest, and why should I dread perils that Karl goes to meet, and from which I would try to save him?’

“You shall not go,” said I hastily; “I will follow your brother for you, Barbara.”

“‘I hoped this from you,’ said she, with a smile of approving sweetness such as an angel might wear, when commending human endeavour; ‘I hoped that you would offer to accompany me, and we will go together. My father is gone, I know, to the neigh-

bouring village, where his rough companions will detain him drinking and laughing till daylight; he frequently stays until the time for next day's labour, and so returns not to our cottage until the following evening after one of these carousals; so we shall be able to follow my poor Karl unobserved to his appointment, which I cannot help dreading is of a fearful nature, for I saw his face as he uttered those words, and there was that in it which made me tremble with dismay.' I availed myself of the agitation that seized her as she merely recalled her brother's look, and urged her to let me follow him that night alone. I represented to her that it was more than probable her sisterly heart led her to exaggerate the danger, and that she could confide in me to protect him to the utmost. I at length prevailed, and she promised to remain.

"From my post of concealment, whence I had so often observed Barbara in her innocent beauty, and listened to her liquid song, I watched the cottage far into the hours of darkness. Just as the neighbouring convent clock chimed eleven, I saw a youth steal softly forth, and proceed with rapid steps in the direction of the forest. At first I carefully kept myself screened within shadow, as I followed the track of the youth, lest he should by chance turn and perceive that he was watched; but he was far too deeply absorbed in his own thoughts, and the project which occupied him, to heed any thing or any body. He went eagerly and recklessly on, and scarcely seemed to note the familiar objects that met his eye, though

the scene was sufficiently striking, but kept on a blind, undeviating, instinctive pace, like one walking in his sleep.

“After we had quitted the spot where the miners’ huts lay thinly scattered, forming a sort of rude hamlet, our path became rougher and more wild. The sky too had clouded over, and the night became boisterous and stormy, adding to the savage dreariness of the scene. The rocks and crags frowned menacingly, as they were partially revealed by the shifting light of the scudding clouds; and the dark pine-trees waved their gloomy heads with ominous aspect, as the windblast howled fiercely through them. They looked as if tossed and hurled to and fro by malignant spirits, while, by their shrieks and threats, they seemed to warn all intruders from venturing thither to witness their torment. It seemed a fit spot for midnight murder, or for the assemblage of evil spirits to hold their unhallowed revels and perform their impious rites. Barbara’s fears, and her confessor’s admonition respecting fiends and demons, seemed as if too likely to be verified by Karl’s repairing at the dead hour of midnight to such a resort as this. Yet still the youth kept on his headlong course. With downward bent head and resolute shoulders, he met the beating rain and the stunning wind, and steadily preserved his onward way, regardless of brawling torrent, steep ascent, abrupt inequalities, gnarled trees, roaring waterfall, obstructive underwood, or whirling branches torn by the wind. Deafening noise, blinding storm, rugged path, were

equally ineffectual in checking his progress; on he went, and on I followed him.

“Suddenly amid the crash and din of the warring elements, came a strange sound as of the chase; discordant bugles, baying hounds, and trampling horses, mingled their noise in the air, and I beheld a train of skeleton hunters take their spectral way along a pale streak that glimmered athwart the dark turbid sky.

“Karl shouted wildly—‘Black huntsman of Rodenstein, descend! come to my succour!’

“But the spectral train kept on, the men hallooing, the horses neighing and trampling, the dogs baying, and the lordly hunter cheering them on in their mad career through the air.

“We too went on till we came to a waste hill-side, where, beneath the withered branches of a lightning-scathed tree stood a gigantic hairy figure, his head and loins begirt with oak leaves, and in his hand an uprooted fir-tree, that served him as a club.

“‘Demon of the Harz, I invoke thy aid!’ gasped Karl; ‘refuse not to help me; remember thou hast ere now promised thy assistance, should I seek it with a determined spirit. I am now resolved.’

“The demon burst into a harsh derisive laugh.

“‘I have yet another name, as thou well knowest! Call upon me by that!’ yelled the fiend as he vanished.

“But the last faint echo of his mocking peal of laughter had scarcely died away, and given place to the solemn stroke of midnight that reached us from

the distant convent bell, when a form in a succinct scholarly dress, with a single tapering feather depending from his student's cap, stood confronting Karl with folded arms, piercing look, and scornful attitude.

“‘And yet it matters not that thou shouldst utter the word,’ said the form, a malignant sneer curling his lip; ‘thou hast already repeated it many times in thy heart, when writhing beneath the perverseness of thy fate. And so thou art resolved, art thou? Tell me how thou art resolved, and why thou hast hitherto disdained my assistance,—assistance offered more than once, ungrateful boy, in our forest meetings? Speak boldly, and tell me how, and why.’

“‘I am resolved no longer to submit to undue tyranny,’ replied the unhappy youth, with the recklessness of one determined to abide all risks in the pursuance of a cherished hope; ‘as long as I believed that patience and submission would at last win me a fair hearing,—as long as I fancied that a reasonable preference might gain attention, and a laudable ambition be permitted to have its free course, I endeavoured calmly to await the time when parental authority would yield its prejudice and sanction my choice. I dreaded to disobey my father, and could not endure the thought of quitting my dear Barbara,—my sweet, innocent sister.’

“‘Name her not!’ hastily interrupted the frowning form.

“‘But my dutiful passiveness has been trampled on,’ continued Karl, heedless of the interruption; ‘my aspirations have been scoffed at and forbidden;

I am irrationally and tyrannically doomed to perpetual slavery, instead of liberty,—to a living burial beneath the earth, instead of free enjoyment of air and sunshine,—to a withering of my faculties, amid the drudgery of a mine, instead of their cultivation, their development, their crowning fruition in the study of a glorious art. Goaded to desperation by so despotic a fate, I am resolved to elude its grasp and fly my native home for ever. Give me the means!’

“‘And who art thou?—who am I?—that I should endow thee with means to pursue thy will?’ scoffingly replied the swart spirit. ‘Come—be honest—thou knowest me well, and what I would have in return for these means—these golden wings that shall enable thee to escape thy fetters and seek artistic freedom and glory. Thou canst doubtless write, as well as thou canst draw,’ sneered he. ‘I will be plain—trace thy name simply here, and unlimited riches, to travel or to spend as thou wilt, shall be thine. Sign, and be free!’

“‘Enslaved rather,’ murmured the youth shuddering, as the spirit drew forth a tablet and a pen, in which lurked a ruddy drop, and held them towards Karl.

“‘Think of the dark, deep mine, where, shrouded from the light of day, your limbs will waste in slavish toil, and your young spirit will be consumed in its own smothered ardour,’ urged the evil tempter; ‘think of Italy and her illustrious Artist-children, among whom your name may one day be enrolled as an adopted brother!’

“‘And thus win immortality among men, at the peril of my own immortal soul!’ faltered the unhappy youth. ‘What—what can I do?’

“‘Think of thy pure sister! Think of thy Heavenly Father, and implore his Almighty aid,’ I exclaimed aloud.

“A sharp clap of thunder rent the air, and then rolled in deep reverberations along the hill-side, while the swart form vanished from the side of Karl, who sank senseless into my arms, as I sprang from my lurking-place to sustain him.

“A startled scream had mingled with the thunder-clap, and presently Barbara came running towards me from the forest, and, flinging herself on her knees close to her brother, used every effort to assist me in recovering him from the deep swoon into which he had fallen.

“Upon his slowly regaining his senses, we all three entered into mutual questions and explanations, which tended to calm and restore the unhappy youth, after the excitement and violent revulsion of feeling that he had lately undergone. We found that Barbara, unable to bear the suspense and anxiety that seized her upon remaining alone in the cottage after her brother had gone forth, had determined to follow us, and had succeeded in overtaking us, just as the sudden thunder-clap had startled her, and she had beheld her brother fall into a swoon. I pressed Karl’s hand as a signal that he should mention nothing of the frightful interview that had preceded her arrival, though it was evident that she suspected something

terrible had occurred to throw her brother into the state of agitation in which she found him; but, on my begging her to postpone all inquiries until the morning, when Karl should be better recovered, we returned to the cottage.

“Barbara’s surmise that her father would not come home that night from his carousal proved correct; so that we had plenty of time to form our plans for the future.

“It was agreed between us that Karl should set out with me in the course of a few days for Italy, and that the expenses of his travel and of his proposed sojourn in Rome should be defrayed by the money I could obtain by the sale of some more of Eudora’s diamonds. As for myself, I was not sorry to have this immediate prospect of a change of scene, which might help me to rid my heart of a heavy pain that seized it on hearing Barbara say—

“‘I part with thee willingly, happily, my brother. Protected as thou art by this brave mariner, and endowed by his generosity with the means of pursuing thy beloved Art, I shall now be able to devote myself to my still more beloved vocation, undisturbed by a single anxious thought for thy future welfare. I shall now be able to resign myself unreservedly to the blissful task of returning thanks for thy past delivery from peril worse than death, and of praying night and day to our Almighty Father to guard thee from all future harm. In the calm seclusion of my convent I can humbly seek the intercession of the blessed Virgin, and sue to the throne of mercy for

the safety and happiness of my dear brother, together with that of his brave and generous friend, whom, notwithstanding his difference of faith, I trust I may hereafter meet in heaven, to thank spiritually for his goodness to me and mine here on earth.'

"At first my spirit sickened to feel that this fair creature, whom I loved so deeply, was thus lost to me for ever in this world; but as I revolved the misery which almost invariably attends a union between those who differ in religious creed, I learned to rejoice in her being so fully wedded to the vocation to which she had been devoted by her mother. She, at any rate, would be spared regret and suffering, and I resolved to find comfort in this thought, and to do my best towards reconciling myself to my own disappointment. Besides, I thought, what right had I to expect that this gentle inland girl would ever have consented to become the wife of one who had an insatiable craving after a wandering life? Why should I doom her to live with a husband who would feel a residence on land a perpetual chain, and perhaps come in time to regard her as the irksome link that rivetted his fetters; or condemn her to a companionship with one who probably might induce her to quit her native land, and incur the perils and hardships of an ocean life for his sake? When I thought of these things, I felt self-rebuked, and contemplated with greater serenity my approaching separation from the sweet, saint-like Barbara. You see, my dear young friends, the magic volume, the gift of old Erudito, the book of self-disenchant-

ment had left some traces of the useful lessons I had read there, and that it had at any rate taught me the habit of conscientious discipline and self-examination ; so that when, soon after, I was called upon to attend with Karl the ceremonial of his sister's entering upon her noviciate in the convent of Saint Barbara, her patron saint, I was enabled to maintain a calm exterior, and to subdue any remaining pangs of selfish regret.

“I beheld her installed among her sister novices, and led away in their train ; their white garments and timid maiden steps, preceding the sober procession of the black-clad nuns, as they paced round the chapel of the convent where the ceremony was performed, previous to admission within the interior precincts. I watched their floating veils, and their departing figures ; and as the sad and solemn hymn was softly chanted by their united voices, I fancied I could distinguish the sweet, full tones that had so often thrilled me with their devotional purity, and which now seemed to reach me with the tender farewell of a benignant angel in soft compassion for my human regret.

“The very next day Karl and I set off on our journey ; he eager to reach the land of his long-desired studies, I anxious to quit a vicinity that had now lost all charm for me.

“At Hanover I converted another of my diamonds into cash ; and though I did not make so good a bargain as I did with the Jew at Cairo, yet it sufficed for our travelling expenses, which were conducted on

the most frugal plan, in order to reserve as much money as possible to furnish funds for Karl's residence in Rome, as well as to supply me with the sum which I had always determined to bestow on the mother of poor Titta, the murdered cabin-boy, as the legacy left her by her son. I resolved to seek her as soon as we reached Genoa, and to give her enough to render the latter days of her old age as comfortable as the small sum which went to the bottom of the sea in the poor lad's neck-kerchief would have made her, had it been quadrupled by the exertions, which he would never have remitted had he been spared to return to her.

"At Göttingen, also, we tarried for a day to call for a young student there, who had once been a neighbour of Karl's, and who was as anxious to visit Italy as Barbara's brother. This young student, whose name was Leopold, had parents who were not only much richer, but more indulgent than the father of my poor friend, and who had yielded to their son's desire to become a musician. After a period of general study, therefore, at the university at Göttingen, he was about to prosecute his own favourite science in Italy, the cradle of the Fine Arts; and he was as anxious to go in the society of his old friend and neighbour, as Karl was to have his companionship.

"Cheerfully and happily did we trudge along day by day. My spirits rose with those of the two merry, good-humoured youths, who were full of pleasant anticipations and high romantic hopes of future fame

and success; and as we drew nearer and nearer to the goal of their wishes they were gayer and gayer and happier and happier. As I looked at Karl's joyous face, and listened to his frank, free laugh, I asked myself whether I had not reaped a rich harvest in converting the agitated care-worn expression that had distorted his countenance that night upon the Brocken into the smiling animated glance that now sparkled from his eyes.

"I sighed as I thought of Barbara; but I was consoled when I looked upon her brother, and saw his present happiness, in which I knew hers was so enwrapt."

"But here is the darkness coming on, my dears," said the old mariner, interrupting his narrative; "I did not know it was so late."

"But you can talk in the dark, you know, Kit, just as well as in the light, can't you?" asked Fanny.

"Get along, do, you coaxer," answered the old man, as he put her gently away from him, bidding God bless her, and wishing them both good night.

CHAPTER X.

LUCERNE. — LAKE OF THE FOUR CANTONS. — THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE. — GENOA. — THE SINGER AND THE PRISONER. — TITTA'S MOTHER. — THE LONE HOUSE.

THE next evening Fanny and her brother resumed their seats by the old mariner's side, and he his narrative, as follows:—

“At Lucerne a letter reached Karl from his sister Barbara. It represented her as the happiest of the happy in her new placid sphere of existence; it invoked blessings on her brother and their joint friend; and anticipated joyfully the period when Karl should return to his native land, an artist of sufficient eminence to paint an altar-piece for the convent of Saint Barbara.

“This letter conduced still farther to animate our spirits, and we embarked next morning on the bosom of the lake of the four cantons, as if wafted onward by seraphic guidance and protection. The misty vapours that ushered in the dawn settled like a thick veil upon the waters, shrouding the features of the surrounding scenery from our view; but when, at length, the sun arose in his strength, and the white folds rolled away, gradually lifting up and floating off in lengthening wreaths, chased by his resistless power, what a scene of grandeur and beauty was dis-

closed to view ! Distant villages, green shores, and snow-clad peaks, gleamed beneath the partial rays of early light ; towering cliffs sprung from the very water's edge, and seemed to defy a landing to any adventurous steersman, driven by stress of weather or by the sudden squalls of wind, that prevail on these Swiss lakes ; or where the land shelved away less precipitously, scattered cottages, and carefully herded flocks cropping a scanty vegetation, bespoke the industry of a people resolved to win an existence among their beloved native mountains, preferring its hardships and the ceaseless contention with the elements which it imposed, to aught of greater luxury and ease presented by life elsewhere. Majestic simplicity with lofty beauty here display their matchless perfection, and the race who dwell amidst such scenery partake of the noble nature of all around,—liberty of conscience, and freedom to breathe their native air, their dearest privilege and chief aim of existence.

“Here, the field of Rutli, a verdant patch suspended almost in mid air, near the summit of one of these bold cliffs, recalls to mind the handful of resolute men that once held their midnight council on that remote spot to discuss their rights, and consult upon the best means of ridding themselves from an oppressive tyranny ; and here too, on the opposite shore, amid almost inaccessible crags, stands the humble chapel which marks the spot where one true heart braved the leap that freed him from the hands of his own gaolers, and led to his country's emancipation. Here, as I mused on the patriot love and

fatherly pangs which had swelled that noble heart, and urged him to perform incredible feats of prowess and skill—feats that throw those of the bloody field and warlike struggle into deepest shade;—what marvel, if, as I thought on these things, I beheld in fancy the form of a man in peasant guise, bearing a cleft apple in his hand, the centre and very core of which was transfixed with an arrow; whilst his humble attire was belied by his free, independent carriage, and the frank, open brow which bore the impress of God's true nobility. We had landed at Fluellen, and, reached Altdorf, the scene itself of Tell's chiefest triumphs, ere these musings of mine had ceased; and then we proceeded along the fair valley which leads to the foot of Mount St. Gothard, the pass of the Alps by which we proposed to cross into Italy. We kept somewhat to the main track, but more frequently diverged, and traversed by-paths and short cuts that led us more directly to the summit than the carriage-road, and enabled us to enjoy minutely the details as well as the general effect of this romantic pass. The rough bridges cast athwart the torrent; the rude chalets sprinkled here and there, exposed to the fury of the seasons, to the threatening avalanche, the swollen water-course, the drenching rain, and the driving wind, the terrific force of which latter was sufficiently indicated by the heavy stones piled carefully on the roof to prevent the tiles from being blown off bodily; the beautiful contrasts of colour afforded by the foliage springing from the grey rocks; the groups of warm-coloured

cattle driven to pasture by some rustic maiden, or grinning cow-boy; the occasional chapel, or winter refuge; and, above all, the majestic snow-clad peaks of the higher Alps rising in towering beauty, and roseate with the touch of the morning sun, combined to form a series of natural pictures that are for ever impressed upon my memory. Upon my friend the artist, of course, they could not fail of producing a strong effect, and the young musician, Leopold, too, I could perceive, no less than Karl, was deeply moved by the beauty of these new scenes among which we were passing. I have noticed that loving students in each Art are almost equally impressed by natural beauty, even when it seems more particularly addressed to an individual predilection. The musician hears melodious echoes in a scene of pastoral loveliness; the painter sees warmth and colour in a solemn harmony wafted from an organ along cathedral aisles; the sculptor beholds graceful forms, the architect just proportion, the engraver correct outlines, and the poet, each and all of these, in some glorious mountain solitude, where Nature appeals eloquently to the ideal of Art, found in the bosom of all her individual votaries. As we proceeded amid these Alpine paths, at first our respective communings with Nature in her beauty, held us all three silent; but, as we after a time spoke softly to each other, and gradually grew into animated discussion together on the loveliness around, we found that there was a fourth person taking a part in our conversation, whom we had not before perceived. We had none of us

noticed at what point of the road he had joined our party, or whence he came, or who he was, or whither he was going; but he walked beside us at our pace, and mingled so easily in the talk, which we were by this time pursuing in loud-voiced earnestness, that it seemed a matter of course to let him go on walking and talking without farther question. He seemed to be, like ourselves, a traveller, in the modest garb of a student, and with no particular mark or pretension about his face or figure. He seemed to be well educated, and to have read a good deal, for with all the subjects touched upon in the course of our conversation he seemed to be conversant, and able to express himself fluently, and even to afford information. But I noticed that there was a tinge of sarcasm in all he said, and a sort of unconscious malice, and involuntary power of depicting the evil side of every thing that came under discussion, which made me instinctively dread and dislike this stranger, while it checked the youthful spirits of my two companions, and made them each moment less gay and animated. In the midst of some trustful vision of the future, uttered in the hopeful spirit of youth by the musician, Leopold, the stranger would throw in some chilling remark about the sanguine temperament of artists, and the ignorance and want of taste with which the public too frequently met their best efforts; and when Karl, in the innocence of his heart, indulged in some dream of a historical picture that was to employ months, nay, years of happily devoted existence, the stranger would drop hints of the attachment which

cardinals and English residents in Rome proverbially cherished for their own portraits. All this was so artfully done, so subtly, though so securely intimated, that the two youths were unconscious of the effect produced upon their minds by the stranger's conversation, but I could perceive the venom he instilled through his apparently careless sentences, and marked well the gloom that crept into the conversation, and spread its shadow over the usually beaming countenances of Karl and Leopold. Each time the stranger spoke, it was as if a deep shade were cast upon everything around, like that of a passing cloud crossing the blue heavens, and blotting earth's fair surface.

“ We had left the district of oaks, ashes, and other trees, and had ascended to less cultivated regions, where pines and struggling shrubs were the only tokens of vegetation. Leopold had lingered somewhat behind, whilst I was rather in advance, when I came upon a bridge crossing a gigantic waterfall that hurled its foaming waters down with roaring vehemence, and dashed forth clouds of white spray amid a crash and din that almost deafened me. I stood to gaze upon the wild grandeur of the tumbling torrent, and waited until my companions should come up with me. I looked back to note how far off they were, and I could see, in one of the winding paths below, Leopold toiling on, while in the intervening turning between him and myself, were Karl and the stranger, apparently in deep conversation. From the spot where I stood, I gained a view of the path which wound, as I have mentioned, like a map be-

neath me; and I could thus perceive the approaching figures of each of my comrades. I could even distinguish the countenance of Karl, which bore marks of strong agitation and terror; but though he was near enough for me distinctly to discern this, the deafening roar of the cataract prevented my hearing the words of their conversation. Presently Karl stopped, and I beheld the figure of the stranger assume an imperative attitude that reminded me of something I had seen before, and then Karl drew back, and shook his head, and waved the stranger from him, while he in turn pressed forward, and eagerly urged some point upon the youth. But suddenly I saw Karl draw himself up, and stretching forth one arm firmly, with an air of indignant menace towards the stranger, he drew forth with his other hand his sister Barbara's letter, which he kissed reverentially, and then placed to his brow, to either side of his bosom, and to his heart, crossing himself devoutly, whilst he cast appealing eyes to heaven, and by the motion of his lips I could see that he called loudly upon the sacred name, for protection against the temptation of the evil spirit. A deep plunge, a discordant yell of defeated malice that rang sharp and high above the roar of the cataract, and then, far down amid the boiling waters of the torrent, I beheld for one moment the form of the Arch-fiend himself, as I had beheld it in succinct dress and taperingly feathered student's cap on the Brocken, one wild and well-remembered night.

“On Karl's overtaking me, his blanched lips and

pallid cheeks plainly betokened the awful struggle he had lately undergone ; but his eyes sparkled with a triumphant lustre that equally betokened his sense of conquest, and determined me to make no allusion to the interview I had witnessed, or the disappearance of the mysterious stranger.

“ Singularly enough, when Leopold rejoined us, he also avoided all mention of our late travelling companion ; as his presence had been unsolicited, so his absence was unnoticed, and we all seemed to be contented with the relief afforded by his withdrawal from our society, without indulging in any comment. But in my own heart, I could not help congratulating myself on the proof I had thus obtained of Karl’s having thrown off all subjugation to the influence of the fiend ; I could not but rejoice to find he had escaped the snares of temptation, and that henceforth he was able to protect himself. I resolved, therefore, that when we should reach Italy, if an opportunity offered of my going to sea, I would relinquish the farther guidance of my young friends, by providing Karl with the promised sum, and despatching him and Leopold on their short journey to Rome. We arrived in Genoa without farther adventure, and after I had converted my diamonds into money, which I did very advantageously, I divided my little fortune into what I considered due proportions, giving the major part to Karl, and reserving the remainder for Titta’s mother. We spent a few days in this beautiful city, that my two young companions might enjoy some rest after our long journey ; and in order that I might

give them a little treat before we parted company, I offered to take them to the Carlo Felice Theatre, where there was an opera performing, in which the part of the Prima Donna was supported by a young English singer, then in the zenith of her fame, and turning the heads of all the Italians.

“Before we went to the Carlo Felice, we were all three taking a turn upon the Corso, when an English carriage rolled by, in which I beheld a fair face that attracted my attention, from its unaffected beauty and candid expression. Such is the force of prejudice, which commonly attaches a stigma to the name of actress, that I felt astonished when some one near me exclaimed: ‘That is Anastasia, the English Prima Donna.’ On the carriage repassing me, which it did on coming round the Corso again, I once more raised my eyes to the countenance of my fair countrywoman, and in my heart asked pardon for the insult I had tacitly offered her, in fancying that because a woman is an actress, her reputation must be injured, and in wondering to see her look good and pure. Whether my face bore the expression of what I felt, I know not, but certain it is, that the lady looked earnestly upon me, and did not withdraw her eyes from me, until the carriage had borne her past the spot where I and my companions stood. Fame had not exaggerated her talent; for in the evening we were entranced by the beauty of her singing, and the magic power of her acting. Karl and I agreed that her voice excelled even Barbara’s in rich sweetness, and volume of tone, while her artistic cultiva-

tion rendered her singing infinitely superior. As for Leopold, he was perfectly enchanted. During the first act of the opera, he was in a state of ecstasy, and while the *divertissement* (as they call the short dance which they give between the acts) occupied the stage, he deigned not to glance towards it; when the opera was concluded, he started up and quitted the theatre, declaring he could not drag down his thoughts, exalted to the seventh heaven by music, to the frivolous region of dancing, ballet, and pantomime, and left Karl and me to stay by ourselves. Just as we also were quitting the theatre, when the performances were all over, a girl darted through the crowd, and seizing my wrist, said: 'Follow me!' I hesitated; but she repeated more earnestly, 'Follow me, I tell you; the Signora Anastasia wants to say something to you of importance.'

"Curious to learn what this could mean, I bade Karl hasten to our lodging, and sup with Leopold without waiting for me, as I might be detained; then, following my conductress, she led me through the stage-door, along some dark passages, up some stairs, down others, across another passage, at the end of which I beheld a glimpse of the stage, the canvass backs and wooden frames of the side scenes, and some half-extinguished lamps; then up some more steps, where there was an open doorway screened by a dark curtain of maroon baize. This curtain was drawn aside by my conductress, and she ushered me into a room, bidding me wait there until the Signora Anastasia came to tell me what she had to say, and

then vanished without another word. I stood patiently for some time, expecting the approach of the Prima Donna in this apartment, which I supposed was her dressing-room. Wax candles stood lighted upon a handsome toilette table strewed with all sorts of elegant knick-knacks, such as scent-bottles, caskets of jewellery, rouge-jars, a fan, a plume of feathers, heaps of bouquets, half-opened notes, verses, a tiara, a spangled veil, and a mask. The floor, too, was littered with various objects; here lay a white satin slipper, there a hastily drawn-off silk stocking; trailing from the tall dressing-glass, a crimson velvet robe spread its ample ermined folds, and on a sofa was flung a black mantle, worn for disguise in the first scene. But when I had looked at all these scattered indications of Anastasia's profession, and had amused myself in recalling how I had seen them make their appearance on the stage that evening; these thoughts then recurring more than twice in succession, I began to wonder that Anastasia did not come, and also to indulge a suspicion that there must be some mistake or some caprice. This latter notion was confirmed soon after by a man coming through the passages, in making his round of the theatre, to see that all the lights were properly put out; and by his exclaiming:—

“That careless wench, Laura, has never put away the Prima Donna's things,—and here are the candles still in. And—why, what do you do here?” added he, addressing me, astonished to find a stranger there.

“I explained, by telling him how I had been sent

for, and asking him if he knew where the Signora Anastasia was.

“‘Why, gone, to be sure; gone long ago; her carriage drove off more than three-quarters of an hour since.’

“I was quite puzzled, and left the theatre wondering what could have induced the mistake; but when I arrived at our lodging, all other thoughts were driven out of my head by finding Karl in great anxiety about his friend Leopold, who had never returned there at all after the opera. It was now late, and I could only conclude that, in his musical rapture, he had missed his way, and was probably wandering about the streets in search of our lodging. Karl and I set forth immediately in hopes of meeting him, but we spent several hours in vainly wandering up and down, for no trace of the youth could we find. The first thing next morning, just as we were about to resume our fruitless quest, a note was put into my hands from Leopold. It contained but a few hurried words, begging me to come to him immediately in the prison, where he had been thrown within the last few hours by his own indiscretion. We hastened to him immediately, and found that the poor youth, on quitting the theatre in a state of musical excitement, which in his sensitive German nature bordered on intoxication, was met by a party of young fellows, who had induced him to go with them to a neighbouring Casino to finish the night. Here he had been led on to play high, and had ended by staking more than all he possessed in the world—

more than the sum devoted to defray his expenses at Rome. Words had passed,—a blow been given,—a fine exacted ; unable to pay which, Leopold had been at once thrown into prison ; and he had sent to me, knowing he could rely upon me for advice and assistance. ‘I know, Kit,’ he concluded, ‘that I can have twice the money at any time from my indulgent parents, by writing to them for it ; but think of the shame, the deep disgrace of letting them know that their son has not strength of mind sufficient to prevent him from risking the very sum which was to enable him to attain the highest aim he had—that of perfecting himself in a noble art. Unworthy, degraded wretch that I am ! A gambler !—a night-brawler ! But listen to me, Kit, while I here take a solemn oath never, never, while I live, to touch card or dice-box more.’

“‘Fatal cards ! fatal dice ! the bane of all that is worthy or noble in man ! Well do you to abjure them, good youth !’ cried a voice near us.

“It was that of a young man, a fellow-prisoner of Leopold’s ; but I had not noticed him when first I entered the cell. He was extremely handsome, but so wan and thin, and his eyes looked so hollow, and shone with so wild a fire, that I felt at once interested in him ; and as soon as I had consoled Leopold as well as I could, by assuring him that means should be taken to secure his freedom, I entered into conversation with this young stranger, and found that his story was indeed a sad one. He was an Englishman, the son of a man richly connected, but who had

speculated largely, and had died suddenly on the failure of his hopes, leaving his widow and son totally unprovided for. The poor widow, anxious, nevertheless, to secure for her son the advantages of foreign travel, had solicited the requisite sum from her friends, and had sent him abroad inadequately informed of the real state of their affairs. The young man, unaccustomed to consider the true value of money, and reared in expensive habits, had been unable to withstand the temptations of the gaming-table, and had, on arriving in Genoa, not only staked and lost all the money he possessed, but had incurred other debts for worthless toys and extravagant follies, and had been thrown into prison for the amount. But when he at length summoned courage to write to England for remittances, he had received a harsh, abrupt reply from his rich relations, informing him that his mother was dead, and that, for their part, they never desired to see so wicked a reprobate more.

“ ‘I have often taken comfort in the thought,’ said he, in conclusion, ‘that the blow which then struck me to the heart was my death-blow. But there are times when I could wish that I might be once more permitted to breathe the fresh air of heaven, and be granted a short period of probation on earth to redeem my former guilt.’

“ His fine eyes flashed eagerly as he spoke of liberty, and his wan cheek burnt with one bright spot, that made me long to bestow fresh air and freedom upon one who seemed too sorely punished for a

youthful error, that he pined to expiate by reformation; but I found, on selling my ring containing the rubies and opals, that it would produce no more than just sufficient to free Leopold from his debt, to pay his fine, and to reinstate the sum for his sojourn in Rome. I resolved, however, to persuade him to write to his parents, telling them the whole truth, as a salutary lesson to him for the future, as well as a retribution for his past error; and I meant to beg him to devote the sum they should send him to the aid of the poor young Englishman, his fellow-prisoner,—whose name, I learned, was Sydney Vincent.

“As I was revolving these thoughts, on my way from the jeweller to whom I had sold the ring, a grave old gentlewoman accosted me, and asked me if I were not the English sailor who had been requested to attend the Signora Anastasia in her dressing-room on the previous evening. I answered in the affirmative; and she replied by requesting I would now favour the signora by going to her own house, and that she would then explain how it was that I had been so uncourteously detained before. The old gentlewoman—who proved to be duenna or lady-companion to Anastasia—then beckoned me to accompany her; and I, secure that so grave a personage as this old lady could be no party to what I had by this time almost been inclined to believe was a sort of trick, followed her through the town, till we came to a handsome villa, surrounded by terraces of orange, citron, pomegranate, and olive trees,

among which bloomed a profusion of roses and other flowers. In a cool shady apartment overlooking the gardens, sat Anastasia, who received me with a graceful apology, for having caused me to wait so long last evening expecting her.

“‘It was owing to a mistake of the poor little dresser, Laura, who attended me last night in the absence of my own maid,’ said she; ‘and I am sure you will forgive the heedless monkey, as I did myself for the many blunders she made in robing me; for the truth is, her poor little head and heart were all the time occupied by thoughts of her mother, who is lying dangerously ill. The Italians are famous for their filial attachment and loving care of their parents; and I have seen instances of this grateful affection, as well as of other kinds of self-denial and devotion to duty among the poor dancers and chorus-girls that would do honour to many a high-born young lady. Our profession is sadly belied,—it possesses brave and charitable hearts, with often a constancy in goodness perfectly marvellous, when we consider to what temptations its members are peculiarly exposed, and by which they are generally surrounded and assailed. However, I must not allow myself to be run away with by a theme on which I own I feel somewhat warmly when I reflect upon the injustice that is frequently done us actresses and singers.’

“I felt myself unconsciously rebuked as Anastasia said this, for I recollected the thoughts I had allowed myself to entertain yesterday, when

she passed me for the first time. But she went on to say:—

“‘I have sent to request your assistance in an affair of some delicacy, sir; for I have no friend here with whom I could entrust its execution, and seeing a countryman of mine, with a countenance whose frankness and pleasant open look warranted my confidence, I ventured to ask him to undertake the matter for me, secure of his kind help.’ I bowed, and she continued:—‘It is this: I went yesterday morning with a party of Italian friends to visit the prison here, as one of the lions of the city, when I was struck with the appearance of a young Englishman there, who interested me peculiarly. He gave me the idea of a chained eagle,—of one who longed to soar in mid-air, but who was fettered to earth, and who was pining to death for lack of sunshine and liberty. I inquired his history, and found that it confirmed my idea. For a miserable sum, a few trifling hundreds, such as are thrown away frequently by the hand of vice or folly upon a shawl or a bracelet, this noble-looking being is to waste hopelessly away in despairing inaction, instead of being restored to light and life and liberty,—and, what is still dearer, the chance of redemption from a sense of past error, by a virtuous future.’

“‘You mean Sydney Vincent,’ I cried, interrupting her; and then I explained how I came to know him, and how fully I shared her sympathy for the unhappy young man, as well as her anxiety that he should be ransomed.

“‘It is for this very purpose that I sent to request your assistance,’ said Anastasia, eagerly. ‘Take this purse; it contains the amount of my poor countryman’s debt. Pay it, and set him free; but give me your solemn promise that you will never divulge to Vincent himself, or to any living soul, who it was that furnished his ransom-money. I have a particular reason for this;—nay, why should I hesitate to tell you at once what it is, that you may guard my secret all the more carefully. The fact is, then, there is such a prejudice against all we actresses do, that were it known I had given a few hundred pounds to redeem a prisoner, and that prisoner a handsome young man, poor Anastasia would very probably lose her character; it would be said that his fine eyes and hair, his graceful figure and intellectual head, had been the motives of her compassion, but that had he been an ugly old man, and fifty times her countryman, she would have left him to rot in gaol long enough. Be secret then, and fulfil my commission faithfully, and as speedily as you possibly can; I know you long, as I do, to set him free.’

“I hastened at once to the prison, and enjoyed the delight of bringing away with me, not only Leopold, but the young Englishman, Sydney Vincent, who could scarcely credit his senses when I told him he was free, and that I begged him to accompany us from that den of misery. He looked so radiant with joy, and even his naturally very handsome features were so embellished by happiness and the rapturous

thought of liberty, that I could not help a moment's wonder crossing my mind whether Anastasia really did love this handsome Englishman after all; though I checked myself for it the next instant as an injustice to the candour with which she had treated me.

“I soon had convincing proof that her liberality had been inspired by no personal liking, but from a pure motive of charity and tender sympathy for an unfortunate captive, deprived of the dearest privilege to an English bosom—freedom; for I learned that very day, that she was on the eve of marriage with a young Italian nobleman. After I had seen my two friends, Karl and Leopold, off on their journey to Rome, and bade adieu to young Vincent, who made many ineffectual attempts to urge me to reveal to him who was the benefactor that advanced the sum for his release, I repaired to Anastasia's house to inform her of his delivery, of his happiness, and of his departure from Genoa in new life and hope.

“Even had I not heard the fact of her approaching marriage, her manner when I told her of the young Englishman's departure, would have convinced me she merely thought of him with kindness and compassion, for she thanked me heartily and unconstrainedly for the way in which I had conducted the affair for her. ‘I know you have yourself found too much pleasure in the execution of my wishes and the release of one of our countrymen, for me to offer you any token of my gratitude, kind friend,’ she said, gracefully, and going to her instrument as

she spoke ; ‘ but perhaps you will let me sing you something you will like, as a farewell from Anastasia.’

“ She sat down and played an affecting strain of mingled pity and hope, descriptive of some victim’s release,—I believe it was a composition of Handel’s, —which moved me so powerfully that when her voice swelled and diminished in a divine close, I could not speak, but remained motionless, and could not even offer her thanks.

“ She gently approached, and pressing my hand cordially and kindly between both hers, smiled, and said :—‘ Do not speak ; your silence is the best homage my song can have. Farewell,—God bless you. I shall ever remember with gratitude the help which the friendly English mariner afforded his countrywoman, the singer.’

“ When I left Anastasia’s house I found it was still early in the day ; so, after dining, I set forth on my long-intended visit to the hut among the hills, described to me by poor Titta, the cabin-boy. I had no difficulty in finding the exact spot, his remembrance had lingered so fondly around it, and had enabled him to depict it so faithfully ; but I slackened my steps as I approached the cottage-door, for I knew that I had a sad tale to tell, and dreaded the task of informing a mother of her son’s death. But I at length entered, and saw a poor woman sitting placidly in a wooden arm-chair, whose fixed eyes, and melancholy patient look told me that she was blind. Her sense of hearing, however, was sufficiently acute, for she heard my approach, and said :—

“ ‘A stranger’s step! What do you want? Are you come to bring me the news I have so long expected?’

“ ‘What news, good mother?’ I asked, as I approached, and took her hand.

“ ‘The tidings of my son’s death,—of my poor Titta’s death; for too well do I know he is dead,—he is drowned, I know it; is he not?’ said she, in a calm, resigned tone.

“ ‘Alas! good mother, it is too true,’ replied I; ‘but I am one of poor Titta’s shipmates; I knew him, and loved him; and he bade me, if I lived to reach Europe, come to Genoa, and find you out, and give you the sum he had hoarded for his dear mother and sister. Here it is. Where is his sister, whom he so dearly loved—where is Peppina?’ asked I, willing to divert the poor woman’s thoughts from the circumstance of her son’s death, of which, however, I wondered to find her so well assured.

“ ‘Peppina is married to her lover, Gianni, the Goatherd,’ answered Titta’s mother; ‘for, after a time, his rich old father relented, and permitted the union of the young people, when he found that Gianni could not be happy without her; they come to see me often, and bring my little grandchild, the baby they have lately had, that I may kiss its soft cheeks, and touch its dimpled hands, and give it my blessing; they have called it after our poor lost Titta, too; so that when I knew too surely that he was drowned, I had this new little cherub to love, as well as my angel boy that is gone to heaven.’

“How did you know so surely that Titta was drowned?” asked I, seeing that she spoke so calmly.

“‘Before the fatal thunder-storm that came one evening among our hills, and struck the light for ever from these eyes,’ replied the blind woman, ‘I saw my poor Titta’s figure several times. I knew it was his apparition, come to warn me of his death; and the first time I beheld it, I felt afraid, and sore distressed; but, by degrees, I became accustomed to the truth, and I felt as if it were a blessed visitation sent by Heaven to soften the grief of a mother’s heart and wean her from the idea of a living son. I learned to welcome the figure of my poor drowned Titta, and to watch for its appearance by the side of my arm-chair in the summer evenings; and, after I was struck with blindness, and could no longer look upon the form I had loved so well living, and cherished so tenderly still, yet I often knew that it hovered near, and I frequently feel that it is close beside my arm-chair, while I console myself with the thought that his blest spirit is among the angels before the throne of God.’

“I raised my eyes involuntarily as she spoke, and there, behind her chair, I beheld the well-known figure of poor Titta, gazing upon me with happy eyes and a serene smile—how different from the expression his face had worn that night I had seen him last, when he poured forth the writhings of his wounded heart. I suppose I uttered some exclamation of surprise and awe; for the blind woman said—

“ ‘ You see him,—do you, sir? I knew he must be near—tell me how my boy looks.’

“ Happy and peaceful, as a blessed spirit should look,’ I whispered, sinking to my knee, and joining in the thanksgiving which was breathed by the be-reaved but resigned mother.

“ I remained some time with her, talking in a cheerful strain, when we had each recovered ourselves from the solemn feeling that possessed us for some time after the vision had departed ; and then she set milk and fruit before me, and thanked me earnestly for my coming so far to bring her the legacy of her beloved son, rendering her old age comfortable and contented through his means. I left her at length, with the pleasant conviction of her complete resignation and calm happiness, and pursued my moonlight path towards Genoa ; for evening had now quite closed in. My road wound through a solitary valley that lay beneath the hills, and I soon approached a lone and dismantled house that I had noticed on my way hither, and which looked as if it had been a country palace belonging to one of the noble Genoese families in former times. I had inquired its history of Titta’s mother when I was chatting with her on indifferent subjects, and found that it had the reputation of being haunted.

“ It had been once upon a time in the possession of a certain Count Giulio, who was a renowned Genoese warrior, and who possessed a very beautiful wife, of whom he was frightfully jealous—so jealous, that he had put her to death on bare suspicion of her

infidelity. So ran the legend, however; and the blind woman added, that it was said he had caused a beautiful full-length picture to be painted of his lovely countess; that after his death a marble statue had been sculptured of the warrior by order of his successor, and that both picture and statue were still to be seen in that old deserted palace, though it had been left to go to ruin by the descendants of the family, who had seen strange sights and heard strange noises, which had induced them to live there no longer.

“I thought over all these things I had so lately heard, as I stood gazing on the grass-grown and moss-patched steps that led to the front entrance of the dilapidated mansion, and wished that I could obtain a sight of the picture, at least, as the countess had been such a celebrated beauty. But the hall-door resisted all attempts I made to open it, and I was retreating disappointed, when I perceived a little side-entrance, which I hoped would afford the means of my gaining admission.

“It proved just as I could have wished; the little door opened readily, and I found myself in a narrow passage, at the end of which there was a winding stair. I went forward and ascended, till I found another door, which was covered with tapestry on the inside. I raised the drapery, and found myself in a large well-furnished study, but the books were mouldering on the shelves, the tapestry hung in rags from the walls in many places, the tables and chairs were covered with dust, which looked like the accumulation of centuries; and a pair of globes, that

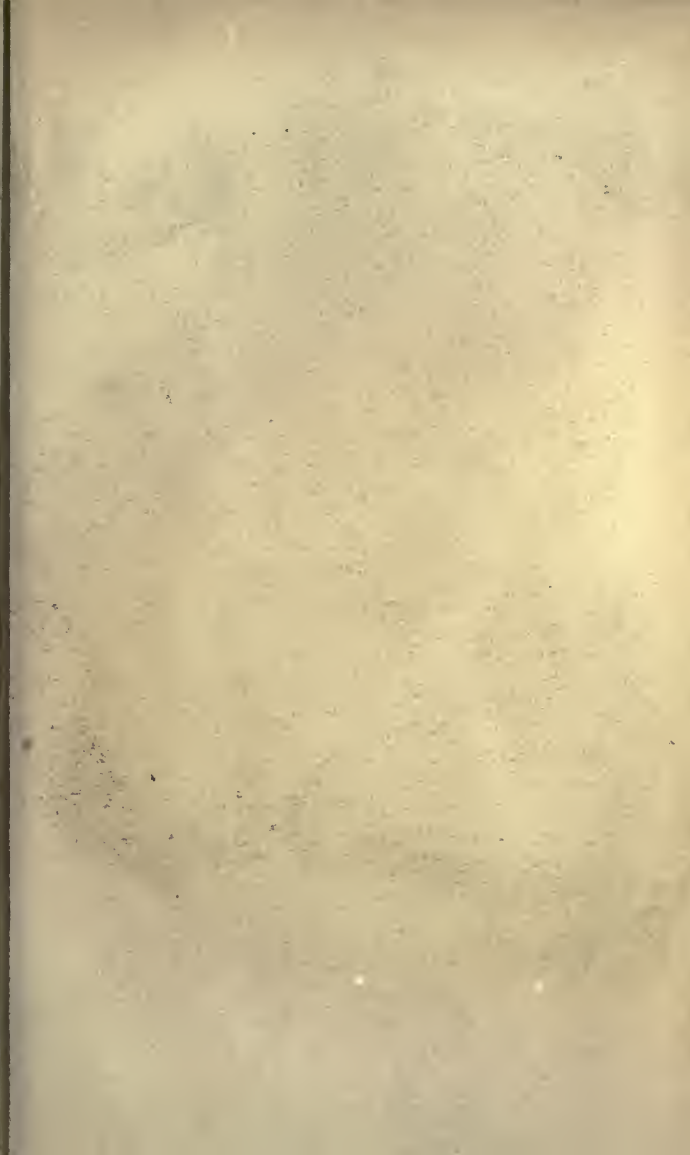
stood near the window, might once have served Galileo, I thought, had they then been invented. But my eye suddenly fell upon a full-length picture, which soon rivetted all my attention. It represented a young, and surpassingly beautiful woman, attired in the old Genoese costume, and whose charms of face and figure fully warranted the fame which had spread of her lovely person; for I could not an instant doubt but that this was the countess's picture, of which I had heard so much. As I gazed upon those pencilled brows, those soft full eyes, languishing beneath their dark lashes, those expressive lips, and upon the graceful proportions of the form, that accorded so well with a face of such rare beauty, I wondered whether any torture of doubt as to the truth of such a creature ought to lead a man to cherish so mean, so blind a passion as jealousy. True, it must be a pang unutterable to see those gentle eyes turn more lovingly, those sweet lips smile more kindly on another than her husband; but ought he not to seek carefully, lest there should exist some defect in himself, some want of sufficient worth or quality on his own part to inspire love, rather than to suspect her of levity and faithlessness towards him?

“‘And could he have the heart to kill her?’ murmured I unconsciously aloud; ‘could jealousy be so mad, so cruel?’

“As I spoke, the canvass waved slightly, as if the lady painted there had shuddered convulsively; and, while I fixed my eyes in amazement on the picture, I beheld the beauteous figure of the countess detach

itself, and glide away through an opposite door. I sprang after the receding form, and found myself in darkness, while the door through which I had rushed closed after me instantly, with a noise like that of a spring-lock snapping to. I groped my way forwards a pace or two, when I felt my extended hand firmly seized by a cold marble grasp, that I could by no effort shake off. I put forth my other hand, that I might ascertain what it was that held me, and I could not help a sickening shiver, as I plainly felt marble fingers clasping round my own living ones; and then a wrist and an arm as far as I could reach, convincing me that I was fast within the clutch of a statue! At that moment a loose outside blind of the dilapidated mansion flapped back in the night breeze, and by the rays of the moon that streamed through the casement, I discovered that I was in a large hall hung round with grim ancestral portraits, that frowned upon me as I stood there in the grasp of their descendant. I turned my eyes towards this descendant himself, and found that it was indeed the statue of Count Giulio, just as I had heard it described. It was that of a tall portly man, in warrior attire; his countenance was stern, and looked doubly cold and inflexible in the pale moon-beams that lay full upon it; his left hand rested upon the hilt of his undrawn sword, and his right griped my unfortunate wrist, keeping me rooted to the spot.

“I trembled to think of the horrible fate I must endure, detained prisoner thus, to starve gradually, and perish alone in a dismal place, abandoned by my





George Cruikshank

The Marble Count.

fellow men, and in the power of this ghastly being; but soon I made an effort to shake off the terror that held me spell-bound almost as much as the marble grasp, and cast about in my mind for means to free myself, if possible. I writhed and twisted my hand to no purpose; I could not withdraw it from the cold fingers that maintained so strict a clasp; my contortions but served to strain my arm and exhaust my strength. Suddenly a bold thought came into my head, as I perceived a group of ancient arms, among which was a heavy battle-axe, lying not far from me, and, stretching myself out as far as I could to reach it, I succeeded in seizing the weapon, exclaiming, as I wielded it on high, 'I will be contented to wear a marble bracelet for the remainder of my days, if I can but mash Signor Count Giulio's wrist off, in return for his squeezing mine so tight.' But ere the battle-axe could descend with the heavy blow, which I aimed with such hearty good will, a loud laugh rang in unearthly tones through the old hall, and I was arrested in my purpose by hearing the statue exclaim, 'Bravo, valiant Englishman! I have often heard that few things can quell the stout hearts of your gallant countrymen, or deprive them of courage and presence of mind to free themselves from peril, however threatened, however beset. I have beheld many a daring feat in my living martial days, and have ever been an admirer of intrepidity, so I am not likely now to resent a bold act, merely because it is directed against myself. Thou art free, therefore, brave

Englishman,' said he, relinquishing his marble grasp, 'and thy undaunted behaviour has won that from Count Giulio, which no cringing solicitation, no pusillanimous dread of his power could have won from him. Beneath this hall is a vaulted chamber, that contains evidence whether fawning or fear ever met favour from me; there lie the skeletons of those who fell victims to my marble grasp when they shrunk dastardly beneath the terror of its imprisonment, and sought not, like thee, to free themselves by the exercise of mental and bodily energy. You may, if you choose, behold these skeletons. Through yonder door you will find a staircase; you can satisfy yourself of the truth of my words, by descending among those heaps of worthless bones, and witnessing the effects of my loathing for all that is cowardly and base.'

"I thanked him, but declined to avail myself of his polite offer, as I begged to assure him I could perfectly rely upon Count Giulio's word, without counting the skeletons of his victims; 'yet,' I ventured to add, 'there is one question I would fain ask—that picture—'

"'Hold!' interrupted the statue, in a voice of thunder, while I could perceive his marble fingers clutch and quiver, as if scarcely able to refrain from seizing my wrist again; 'carry not boldness into rashness—seek not to pry into secrets that concern thee not! Away! and thank thy stars that thou hast escaped the penalty of thy impertinent curiosity.'

“I waited not to be twice bidden; I took such excellent advice as speedily as I could, by advancing to the hall door, and drawing back the rusty bolt; and when I found myself once more without the walls of the dismantled palazzo, I failed not to utter a devout thanksgiving, that instead of mouldering beneath its dreary vaults, I was hale and hearty in the flesh, and breathing the pure air of heaven, and trudging cheerily back to Genoa, singing a blithe sea-ditty. Not many hours more, and I was at sea once again, sailing away from the harbour of ‘Genoa la Superba;’ and as I looked back upon the magnificent city, which rose like a vast amphitheatre of palaces against the stately range of maritime alps, I acknowledged the meetness of the surname which the Italians had bestowed upon the beautiful birth-place of Columbus, Prince of Mariners.

“I felt my spirit rise, and my heart dance with buoyant delight, as I once more found myself bounding away over the element I loved so well. I exulted as I was borne aloft upon the crests of the waves, and darted like a bird over the bright clear waters, that heaved and swelled proudly, rolling their translucent length in ceaseless undulation. I felt as if I could gaze for ever into their green depths, and ponder upon their fathomless mysteries. I was transported with a sense of freedom, of boundless liberty, as I scanned the distant horizon, and bared my brow to the ocean breeze, and looked abroad into the vast expanse of sky—in short, my dears, I was an old sailor going to sea again, after

some months of wandering upon land—which sufficiently explains the state of rapture in which I found myself on quitting the shores of lovely Italy. But we must think of new adventures to-morrow; it is too late to-night for any more yarns.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRE AT SEA.—THE ISLAND OF OMBROSA.—VELATA.

“WELL then, Kit, now for another yarn!” exclaimed the young brother and sister next evening.

“Well, my dears,” replied the old mariner, “I had enjoyed my return to sea for about five weeks, with nothing to damp my ardour, nothing to interfere with my delight. The weather was fine, the breezes were just sufficient to send us pleasantly on, and varied only so as to make our course all the more agreeable, for the deviations we were compelled to pursue.

“‘What can the land-lubbers mean, by abusing a sea-faring life?’ said a young sailor on board to me one day; ‘they talk of its perils, as if there were none on shore; they talk of its hardships, as if nobody ever heard of such a thing as working hard on shore. I should like to know, now, if this isn’t a jolly life we’re leading here, and much better than being stifled up on land.’

“‘Wait a bit, my lad, wait a bit,’ said the voice of an old weather-beaten seaman, who stood near us at the helm, and whose wrinkled face and tanned skin spoke of many a buffet about the world,—of many a rough night, and of many a sun-burning; ‘this is

your first voyage, my lad; wait till you've been as many as I have, and then let's hear what you've got to say about the perils and hardships of the sea.'

"'O, you mean storms and shipwrecks, and that sort of thing—they're perils to be sure,' flippantly replied the young sailor; 'but you know there are such things as storms and earthquakes on land, my good old Triton. And then for hardships; why surely weaving, and digging, and threshing, and such like land labour, are as hard work as furling and unfurling sails, swabbing the decks, or climbing the shrouds.'

"'Or working at the pumps for three days and nights in succession, while you watch how many inches the water gains upon you every six hours; or rowing for dear life in an open boat upon a bit of salt junk and a tablespoonful of fresh water for each day's ration, with no land in sight, and your ship gone to the bottom,' said the old seaman quietly.

"'You speak of disastrous extremities, my good friend,' returned the other; 'time enough to look out for squalls when they come.'

"'There's more besides squalls—or even famine, at sea,' remarked the old seaman.

"'Weil, a sea-life for me!' exclaimed the young man; 'and let's enjoy the fine weather while we can. I hate croaking.'

"'So do I,' returned the old sailor; 'Heaven forbid I should mar the bright sunshine by casting a cloud of gloom athwart it; but, all I say is, don't boast too much, and don't flee at the landmen,

until you've made quite sure that you've got the best of it.'

" 'Well, my toast, when I have my grog next, shall be — Huzza for a sailor's life—may he long enjoy a light heart and a merry one!' said the young fellow.

" 'And mine shall be — Huzza for the sailor!— may he ever keep a watchful eye, a ready hand, and a brave heart!' replied the old seaman.

" 'Why, of course, every sailor has a brave heart, hasn't he, old Neptune? I suppose we shall all be brave enough when danger comes, shan't we?'

" 'We shall see,' quietly rejoined the old helmsman; and there the conversation dropped.

" Presently, there was a man came astern, who hurriedly said that smoke had been seen to issue from one of the hatchways. The mere thought of a fire on board ship in the open sea is sufficient to appal the stoutest heart, and very soon all betokened the consternation which followed the man's announcement. The captain gave immediate orders for several sails to be wetted and placed across the hatchways, to prevent, if possible, the air from penetrating into the hold; but it had already obtained a free passage thither, and caused a great volume of smoke to ascend, and the fire to gain considerable ground. All hands were busily employed in endeavouring to extinguish it; the pumps were kept at work; buckets were passed to and fro; even our fresh water was emptied from the tanks, sacrificed at once, and cast hastily upon the flames; they, how-

ever, baffled all our efforts, and burst forth in every direction, ascending in spiral tongues and forked streams, that licked the masts and consumed the cordage, and darted destruction everywhere, carrying terror and dismay to all on board.

“ Still the men worked desperately, as if the twofold danger inspired them with twofold courage; between the two elements closely pressing on either side to devour us, we seemed to feel doubly urged to exertion.

“ But human toil, human bravery was unavailing; and it shortly became evident that nothing could save the vessel; a huge stream of fire flamed up from the very centre of the ship, an awful beacon of triumph and conquest; and the men, utterly defeated by one enemy, recklessly committed themselves to the mercy of the other. Spars, yards, fragments of masts, planks, coops, empty chests, any and everything was seized in the confusion and tossed overboard by the unhappy creatures, who flung themselves hastily into the sea after these frail means of preservation. The confusion was extreme; some plunged into the water and sunk immediately; others swam about, and clung to the floating articles; many were stunned with the blazing fragments of the wreck; several were shot by the balls that were discharged from the guns by the flames; and others were scorched and burnt to death by the intense heat and the myriads of burning embers, which fell in all directions amid showers of sparks and volumes of smoke. In the confusion, I saw the old seaman

whom I before mentioned; he was standing close to his captain, urging him to save himself and quit the ship, while he shook off the red-hot cinders that poured around his own grey head. As he spoke, a portion of the burning wreck swept the captain overboard, and the old man, casting his eyes devoutly to heaven for one moment, threw himself resolutely into the sea, where I saw him seized in the clutch of a poor drowning wretch, who dragged him beneath the waters, and they both sunk together. The young fellow, who had boasted so loudly in the morning, had found his way, with a few other equally bold companions, to the spirit-store, where they had staved in a rum-cask, and died roaring drunk. The fate of the old seaman had taught me precaution; so that the first thing I did, upon leaping overboard myself, was carefully to shun the struggling wretches around, who would have seized and involved me in their own destruction. Fortunately I escaped this, and all the other perils of the burning vessel, for I swam rapidly and steadily to windward, that I might avoid her dangerous proximity. I had not gained more than a couple of miles distance, when I heard a tremendous explosion, and, looking back, I perceived huge pieces of flaming wood hurled high into the air, amid a cloud of darkness: the fire must have reached the powder-room, and blown up the ship. With it, I suppose, perished all my unfortunate shipmates, for I never beheld one of them again. My heart wept with compassion for my lost friends, and my senses reeled with this crowning horror of

the exploding vessel; which, joined to all I had previously beheld that day, combined to bewilder and depress me, so that I could have sobbed in the midst of the open sea; but I made a powerful effort to control my emotion and rouse my utmost fortitude. I swam on, therefore, as vigorously as I could; but I suffered physically as well as mentally; I had been severely scorched while still on board the burning ship, and the sun shed his rays fiercely upon my limbs and aching head, exposed now to his ardour, as I made my way each moment more feebly through the water.

“I was about, at length, to yield, unable to force my exhausted frame to further exertion, when I perceived some green boughs floating at a little distance. I made a last energetic effort, and succeeded in reaching this unexpected ark of refuge. It proved to be an uprooted tree, which must have been but lately torn from the earth, for its leaves were not yet withered; and as I crept beneath their welcome shade, and returned Heaven thanks for this timely succour, I drew comfort from the assurance it afforded that land could not be far distant. I reclined beneath my luxurious floating bower in ease and safety, while this natural raft of green timber bore me gently on towards the shore, for the tide was fortunately rolling in very rapidly.

“I landed on a gentle grassy slope, and found that I was in a beautiful fertile island, abounding with all that is lovely in nature and most attractive to man's senses. Trees bending with the weight of luscious

fruits, formed groves of wooing umbrage and coolness; flaunting vines and climbing plants intermingled their clusters of grapes and blossoms, and enwreathed the barks of ash, elm, and oak, with palm and other foreign trees in a universal bond of fellowship. Birds of vivid plumage and melodious song sported from bough to bough, and filled the air with their sprightly music. Bright fish darted flashingly in the clear streams that meandered through the landscape, and imparted the charm of motion to a scene so exquisitely tranquil, yet fruitful.

“I saw no signs of inhabitants, with the exception of a small solitary hut, which, though its construction was of the rudest kind, being built merely of the trunks of trees roughly hewn and placed nearly in a circle, yet it was so surrounded and interlaced by garlands of flowering creepers—the rose, the magnolia, the honeysuckle, the jasmin, the scarlet trumpet-flower, and the purple morandia, that it looked like a floral temple more than a human dwelling. I was just about to approach and enter, when my attention was attracted by the sound of female laughter. The peal of merriment issued from a thick grove hard by; and I stood still and listened. Yes, it was distinctly the noise of a party of giggling girls at high romps, and I could even distinguish that they spoke a mixed dialect, half Indian half Spanish; for, as you may suppose, my dears, I had picked up a kind of smattering of many different languages during my wandering travels, and could make out most that was said to me everywhere, as well as contrive to make myself understood in return.

“‘Throw the ball to me next!’ I heard clearly from one gay voice.

“‘No, no! It is Velata’s turn now! Velata! Velata! quick, quick!’ exclaimed a chorus of sportive girlish tones.

“I was now within the outer circle of trees that formed the entrance to the small wood. The speakers seemed to be only on the other side of an acacia tree near which I stood, and yet I could see no one. The grove, but for the sounds of jocund mirth that rung through it, seemed a complete solitude. I stepped forward from the tree into an open space, whence the sounds certainly proceeded; and then suddenly, a piercing shriek burst forth as from several affrighted women, mingled with many an outcry of wild surprise. These exclamations and startled tones receded rapidly; and, though I ran forward, they quickly died away, leaving me in total silence. I felt strangely perplexed; it was evident there were inhabitants of the island, for I was quite sure I had been close to the beings whose voices I had heard, though I could see none.

“A sensation of undefined alarm crept over me, at the thought of my vicinity to creatures whose nature I could not ascertain; for, though what little I did know of them was certainly not much calculated to inspire fear, yet I was by this time in a state well fitted for the growth of vague uneasiness and discomfort. The fact is, I was very ill; the terrific scene of the burning ship, the pain from my scorched and blistered body, the fatigue of swimming so far,

with the rays of a burning sun darting full upon my uncovered head, had combined to throw me into a severe fever, and I now began to sink under the first coming on of the attack. I dragged my heavy limbs through the grove, and made my way from beneath the trees, with the idea of seeking shelter in the solitary hut I had perceived near the entrance of the wood; but, though the distance was so slight, my strength was insufficient to bear me thither, and I sunk upon the grass just as I had reached the threshold. The tranquil island scene swam before my distempered vision, my head throbbled and reeled, my burning eyelids closed, a deep sigh fluttered from my parched lips, and I fell prostrate.

“The first thing of which I was conscious, when I recovered, was a sense of delicious coolness; a balmy fragrance seemed to pervade the air, and a deep feeling of repose and healing was diffused throughout my languid frame. I heaved a sigh of placid contentment—oh, how different from the one which had fluttered forth when I sunk to the earth last,—and I dreamily opened my eyes to discover where I was. I found that I was lying upon a couch of skins, in a wooden hut, which I soon concluded must be the interior of the one I had seen when I was attacked by fever.

“But, though I was able to conclude thus far, I could form no guess as to how long I had lain there, or by whom I had been transported thither. And yet the suppleness of my skin, the moisture of my mouth, the relief of my aching head, having so en-

tirely replaced the feverish symptoms by which I was oppressed when I sunk beneath my illness, all confirmed my impression that I must not only have had a serious illness, but that I had been carefully tended and nursed through it by some unknown friend. Who could this kind friend be? I gazed feebly round the small apartment—for I was still weak—and all I saw convinced me that it was a woman's hand which had been so benevolently extended to my relief. There were so many evidences of a feminine presence, even in that rude interior, that I could not doubt for a moment but that a woman had been my preserving angel. There was that general air of neatness which the cabin of the wildest savage almost instinctively assumes, in common with the boudoir of the lady of fashion; there was that graceful disposal of flowers around the window of the hut, which might have been arranged in a clusteringly heaped vase elsewhere; there was a smooth comfort in the piling of the skins around me, that would have been a judicious placing of pillows and downy quilts in a civilized bed; there was a cooling drink set close by my side—that was surely mingled by no other than a womanly hand, whether the vessel that contained it were formed of a cocoa-nut shell, or of elaborate Dresden china.

“I lay musing thus, pleasantly enough, while I watched the rays of the sun playing among the leaves and blossoms at the window, and casting twinkling shadows upon my couch, when suddenly I heard a low sweet womanly voice singing close outside of he

window, in that sort of gentle undertone, as if the singer were anxious not to disturb another, yet giving vent to her own blithe feelings while she pursued her work. I could distinguish words; they seemed to be a sort of invocation for aid in gardening, and a eulogium on the beauty of the flowers she was doubtless employed in training and tending. I lay listening breathlessly. Presently the song ended, and the door of the hut was pushed gently, as if some one were endeavouring to enter without noise. The door opened, but no object darkened the threshold. The sunshine streamed through the doorway in an uninterrupted flood of light, and I could distinctly see the beautiful landscape during the few seconds before the door was shut again softly by the same unseen hand.

“My heart beat chokingly, and I closed my eyes. As I lay perfectly motionless, I felt a warm breath close to my cheek, as if some one leant over me.

“‘He is better,—surely better,’ said a voice close to my ear.

“I could not help starting violently, and I fancied the person withdrew as abruptly, while I gasped in irrepressible emotion—

“For Heaven’s sake, who is there?”

“‘I,’ said the same sweet voice; ‘it is only I.’

“‘But who are you? and where are you?’ exclaimed I impatiently, for, though I strained my eyes in the direction of the voice, I could see nothing.

“‘I am Velata—I am here, close to your heap of skins; is it possible you do not see me? Or is it

indeed true, as the tradition of our country says, that there are people of other nations across the great sea to whom we are invisible?’

“As these words were uttered, I felt a soft hand lightly laid on mine. I eagerly grasped it, and found warm little flesh and blood fingers, which pressed mine kindly as I caressed them.

“‘It is you then who have been my kind nurse ; it is to you I owe my life!’ I exclaimed. ‘Oh that I could look at you, to thank you for all your patient goodness—your kindness towards an unhappy stranger, a shipwrecked, perishing wretch, who but for you must have died. I feel like a blind man, when I look towards your voice ; let me hear it, that I may be sure of your presence.’

“She indulged me by speaking at length. She told me how startled she and her companions had been at my unexpected appearance that morning, when I first came among them. They had all fled in terror at seeing a man suddenly approach ; but that she herself had summoned courage to remain, and watch me, as she saw that I looked ill, and as if needing relief and support. She said that she had followed me from the wood, had seen me approach the hut, and sink exhausted upon the grass at its threshold ; that she had raised my head from the earth, and had been just about to seek fresh water, that she might sprinkle it over my face to revive me, when her companions, who had followed to look for her, had assisted her in lifting me into the hut, and had joined their endeavours to hers for my recovery.

But when they found more than an hour elapse, and that I still gave no signs of returning to myself, they had tried to persuade her to leave me to my fate, as it was then time to return to their canoes. She explained to me that it was the habit of the young maidens of a neighbouring large island, to come hither in the spring season of the year, and celebrate a vernal festival with various sports and pastimes. It was a rule that no man should join this festival on any pretence whatever, and that therefore the canoes were conducted hither by the troops of young girls themselves, who steered and rowed with much expertness, and performed feats of great dexterity during their annual visit to this spot. The festival was looked forward to with delight, and was a source of great pride and enjoyment to its fair votaries. A sense of freedom and independence in the management of their miniature fleet, complete seclusion and liberty in their frolicsome games while dancing, singing, running, playing, gathering fruit, and sporting hither and thither uncontrolled through the lovely plains of this pleasant island, made the vernal festival a cherished privilege among them. Great, then, was their dismay upon finding a male intruder suddenly make his appearance among them; and when they would have left the stranger to his fate, upon finding their benevolent attempts to restore him ineffectual, the approach of the hour when it was necessary for them to return to their own island in the canoes, they found they could not persuade Velata to accompany them. She said that

nothing should induce her to leave an unfortunate being to perish; that she had no particular ties to bind her to their own island; and that she felt it now to be her first duty to stay and protect the charge which chance had cast in her way. The hut, which was a sort of rustic temple, dedicated to the entertainment of the fair vestals during their resort to this spot, would suffice for a shelter for herself and her poor patient, and she bade them hesitate not to leave her where she herself preferred, and determined, to stay. On her repeated assurances to this effect, and finding that all their persuasions were vain, they quitted her, and returned to the canoes, not without some laughing mockery at her quixotic devotion to self-imposed hospital duties.

“‘I listened to their gay voices,’ said Velata, in conclusion, ‘as they gradually receded; soon the last faint echoes of their rallying mirth died upon my ear, and I found myself alone with my poor patient, whose fevered breathing and restless twitchings soon occupied all my attention. I have had sad teaching in the part of a nurse,’ continued she, ‘for my poor father lingered long of the fever and wounds of which he died, after fighting bravely for his country in one of the battles between ours and a neighbouring land; but I have had reason to rejoice in my experience, since it has been at length the means of restoring you to health. But you are not yet strong, and I have too long neglected my nursing duties while I have been talking; so I will now go and prepare some of these herbs for you.’

“She withdrew her hand from mine as she spoke for I had held it clasped all this time, that I might have the better sense of her presence.

“But now that she glided about silently in the pursuit of her herbal preparation, I felt singularly affected by the knowledge that there was this invisible being near me—a gentle, affectionate, ministering comforter—one who had devoted herself to my preservation, and who was at this very moment actively employed in my behalf. And yet I could see no vestige of her; I could only trace her movements by the articles she placed and replaced, as she went hither and thither fetching and arranging the various ingredients she wanted. I saw the cocoa-nut cup removed from the side of my couch, but I strained my eyes in vain to distinguish the hand that conveyed it; I beheld the small heap of herbs raised from the table where it lay, and the several sprays divide and sort themselves in mid air, then detach their blossoms and leaves from the stalks, and fall into the vessel placed there to receive them, but I looked vainly for the deft little fingers that performed these operations with so nimble a grace; I perceived a bunch of grapes and some rosy fruit successively discharge their juice into the cup, but I could discern no outline of the palms which daintily pressed the ripe clusters together. At first this curious partial sight amused, though it perplexed me; it was so strange to see these different objects move about, and perform their several evolutions spontaneously, and without any apparent cause; but

soon my amusement merged into an intense wish to behold the fair motive power itself, and to feel again assured of her actual presence.

“‘Velata!’ I exclaimed, ‘I wish you would speak; I cannot see you—and I want to hear you—to be certain you are there.’

“She laughed a pleasant little musical laugh, and then chatted gaily about the herbs and the fruit she was arranging, and said, ‘she hoped I should soon be well enough to get up and walk out into the fresh air.’

“‘I think I am well enough already,’ said I, making an effort to raise myself upon my elbow; but I soon found my strength was unequal to the task, for my arm gave way under me immediately, and I fell back upon the couch.

“I heard a little hurried movement towards me, as if my nurse feared I was ill; but, perceiving how it was, she uttered her pleasant laugh again, and said—

“‘You see you must still be content to be my patient for a while, and must not attempt to move, till I give you leave.’

“I soon saw by the motion of some of the articles in the hut, that Velata was employed in little housewifely duties, of arranging and disposing the order of the room; I took delight in watching her progress through them, and by constantly talking to her, and winning her to answer, I contrived very well to ascertain whereabouts she was. I then bethought me of asking her to bring me a branch of the flowery woodbine that threw its garlands around the

window of the hut; this I twined amid her hair, and could then trace the various glidings to and fro of the branch, and imagine the sweet face that moved about beneath its fragrant blossoms.

“Another device of mine to obtain evidence of her actuality was, asking her to sing; which she would do untiringly by the hour together, while she pursued her daily avocations. Her voice was full and melodious, and she knew a vast store of legendary tales of her country that were set to wild national airs; these she would chant to me, varying their mood from sportive to sad, from plaintive to gay, from the lulling soothing melody of the cradle-song to the spirited strain of the martial war-cry and battle-summons.

“Day by day I increased in strength, and day by day she tended me with unwearied care and affectionate attention, until I was completely recovered. Each day I had fresh cause for gratitude to my gentle, my assiduous nurse, my kind preserver. Each day developed some new instance of sweet nature, obliging disposition, winning gaiety, and endearing qualities. What wonder if I grew to love my invisible guardian with an intensity of affection such as I had never before felt for woman? If she were invisible to my sense of sight, was she not manifest to my heart by a thousand instances of kindness, goodness, and moral beauty, as well as by the attractions of her exquisite singing, her melodious speaking-voice, and her soft ministering hand?

“Proud and happy was I when I first was able to

rise from my sick bed, and aid her in some of her daily avocations. I had long fretted beneath the necessity my illness imposed upon me of lying there utterly useless, and unable to relieve my gentle nurse of any of her duties; I felt my manliness impugned by being compelled to allow her to be constantly employed in my behalf, without being able to exert myself in the least for her. It was with a feeling of exultation, therefore, that I one morning arose, when I knew she would be absent some hours to obtain fruit for our afternoon meal, and set myself eagerly to work to collect wood, to fetch water, to feather some fresh arrows for her bow, to shape some slight article for our household,—and, in short, to busy myself about as many useful things as I could against her return. I was just beginning to own unwillingly to myself, that even this slight exertion had somewhat overtaxed my newly-recovered strength, when I beheld the basket, which Velata had fashioned of twigs to carry her fruit in, coming towards me from a distance, heaped up with glowing pomegranates, and clusters of purple grapes. I knew that it was borne along by my gentle friend, and I hastened towards her to relieve her from her burthen.

“‘Let me lift the basket from your head, dear Velata,’ I exclaimed, as I approached, ‘and let me replace it by this garland of roses, which I have wreathed for you in your absence, to celebrate the recovery of your grateful patient. May I not crown the brow of my kind physician and nurse?’ added I, in some surprise at finding that she drew back.

“‘No, no—not with those flowers,’ I heard her say, and with an accent which betrayed to my ear that she was agitated; for I had now become so accustomed to study the inflections and different tones of her voice, that I learned to guess at her feelings through this medium.

“‘Why not with these?—surely there are no such beauteous flowers as roses—best fitted, therefore, to indicate to me the position of that fair face;’ I replied. ‘Remember, the wreaths you wear serve to point out to me whereabouts you are, and form the only beacons to guide me in looking towards the fair face I love to imagine allowing its eyes to rest upon mine.’

“‘You have twice called my face fair, in this short sentence, my good friend,’ replied Velata playfully; ‘how do you know it is fair? I am afraid you are a mere flatterer.’

“‘I am bound in courtesy to fancy it all that is lovely, since I cannot prove it to be the contrary,’ answered I. ‘Besides, does it not belong to a bounteous hand and a generous heart—and is not every face that is linked with such companions, of necessity beautiful to the man who is blessed by them?’

“I paused; but Velata uttered no reply. I had taken her hand to lead her home, and I felt it tremble within my own. We proceeded in silence towards the hut; but, when we arrived there, and she perceived the tokens of my morning’s work, she abruptly exclaimed, as if she strove to resume her former playful tone—

“‘I have a great mind to be extremely angry; is this the way my injunctions are obeyed? The very first opportunity is seized during my absence by my refractory patient; and here I find he has been doing a great many things he ought not to have done, and has been over-exerting himself, and he will throw himself back, and be ill again. I desire you will sit down quietly, and not venture to stir a finger, or speak a word, till I permit you to do so. I mean to be a very arbitrary nurse.’

“I was about to infringe her commands, and reply; but I found it was indeed too true that I was not yet so strong as I fancied myself, for I was fain to sit down at once and struggle with the faintness which I indignantly felt was creeping over me.

“I have frequently noticed that men suffer from this resentful feeling, when they are attacked by illness. They cannot help being angry that they should be subject to a weakness that interferes with the potency of their will, no less than the vigour of their frame; and it is this, I suppose, that makes us generally less tolerant of sickness than women are. However this may be, I endured that sort of vexation keenly then; I was disappointed to find myself frustrated in my hope of proving myself grateful, and yielded very reluctantly to the necessity of acknowledging that I still felt the effects of the fever.

“During my relapse, Velata renewed all her old soothing ministry, and forbore to reproach me with the fact of its being greatly my own fault, so that not many days elapsed before I was well enough to sit

out in the open air, on a mossy seat, which my nurse had prepared for me beneath a tree that grew near to the hut.

“She had been singing to me, and chatting cheerfully, and devising various means to entertain her ‘impatient invalid,’ as she called me, declaring that she could by no means call me her ‘patient;’ but I was restless, and, instead of being soothed by her voice, as I usually was when I listened to it, I felt my longing to behold her irritated and roused to an insupportable degree; I sighed more than once half unconsciously, as I yielded to a despondent feeling that crept over me, and that cast a gloom even upon the fair landscape, the bright sunshine, and the pleasant free air.

“‘You are worse to-day, I fear, my dear friend,’ said Velata tenderly, sitting down beside me; ‘and yet this lovely morning and pure air ought to make you better—nay, quite well.’

“‘I used to long for my recovery, but I have learned to dread getting well,’ said I, more sadly than I felt her kind care deserved from me; but I could not resist the depression of the moment.

“‘Indeed! Then you are out of spirits as well as out of health. Perhaps you are tired of this inactive life, and long to pursue the wanderings of which you have so often told me,’ added she tremulously. ‘But you know you must be well for that; you cannot go to sea until you are strong again.’

“‘It is not I who wish to go away; I only fear that when my kind nurse finds her ‘impatient inva-

lid, quite recovered, that it is she who will be anxious to quit this place and return to her own country.'

"'I have nothing to lead me to wish to return thither,' said she. 'When my poor father died, I had no parent left, for my mother never loved me, and would scarcely ever bear me in her sight. I did not even live with her; for, when she bade me quit her presence, as one long loathed and only tolerated during my father's life, I took refuge with friends, the parents of a young companion of mine, who was one of those who came to this island on our late festival here. I have no true home,' added Velata, in a tone as sad as my own had been.

"But it was joyfully now, that I exclaimed: 'Then let us make one here, together! I desire no other home! I wish but for you—to stay with you, Velata, ever!'

"I passed my arm round the gentle being that sat on the moss beside me, as I added:—'be mine, Velata, and crown your generous kindness, by telling me you are as happy in remaining with me, as I am in vowing to live here for ever with you!'

"A little quick-beating heart fluttered beneath the hand with which I held her to me, and a drooping head leant upon my bosom, as I heard her say: 'You would have me be your wife, then?'

"'I desire nothing upon earth so fondly!' I replied.

"'I will tell you now, why I refused your garland, the other day,' whispered Velata, after a short pause. 'It is the custom of our nation, when two people wish to become man and wife, for them to place a coronal

of roses on each other's head ; and thus crowned, to kneel together in the open air, uttering a vow to the Creator of the universe, that they, his children, will be true and faithful in mutual wedded love until their life's end. This constitutes the ceremony of marriage among us of the isles of Ombrosa ; and now you understand why I would not let you bind my temples with roses, unless you knew they also bound me to you for ever.'

“‘ But, henceforth, my bride will wear no other flower!’ I exclaimed, springing from the earth with an animation long a stranger to my frame, and drawing her towards the spot where roses clustered in luxurious profusion. We gathered heaps of the blushing blossoms—oh, well called queen of flowers!—the rich full bloom of the damask, the intense inward-glowing beauty of the moss-bud, the lustrous purity of the white, all were mingled in our chaplets. Symmetry and grace of form, wealth of colour, and voluptuous fragrance, combined their perfections in our nuptial wreaths—rarer diadems, and conferring a more precious dominion of bliss than a monarch's crown. Earthly sway—kingly power—sovereign command—what are ye to wedded confidence, mutual comfort, and the united happiness of two loving hearts? Fain would I have remained to watch the coronal of roses, when I had placed it on the brow of my unseen but well-beloved bride—fain would I have never quitted her side, or ceased for an instant to guard the treasure I had gained by the fervent vow which bound us for life to each other ; but when my Eve prepared

her nuptial feast, and bade me seek some fruit, to aid her in heaping it with due profusion, what could I do but fulfil the first behest she had ever given me ?

“ I took the basket, therefore, and proceeded to the wood, resolving to return with my best speed. I had collected heaps of peaches, green and purple figs and grapes, bright pomegranates, apricots, nectarines, bloom-covered plums, and ruddy-spotted green-gages, which, together with their varied foliage, overhung the sides of my basket in rich exuberance, and formed a beautiful group, when I heard something flutter on a tree near to me, and on looking up I saw a white dove that had been struck by a hawk, and was struggling to free itself from the branches among which it had fallen ;—its victor having been probably scared from its prey by my presence. I hastened to the wounded bird’s assistance, but it had just contrived to fly feebly on a little way, when the thought struck me that I would endeavour to secure the poor little creature, and take it to the hut as a welcome offering to Velata, whose tender fostering care would soon restore the shattered wing.

“ Sufficient strength remained, however, to enable the bird to elude my efforts to catch it for some time ; the poor little fugitive limped and fluttered from bough to bough, from bush to bramble, now tumbling down upon the grass, now gaining a low twig or branch, eager to escape, and ignorant of the benevolent intentions with which I pursued him. But at length I succeeded in securing him ; and then, carefully placing him in my bosom, I hastily retraced my steps

to the spot where I had left the basket of fruit, and seizing it up, I hurried to the hut, vexed at the time I had unconsciously suffered to elapse in my pursuit of the wounded dove.

“‘Velata! Velata!’ I cried, as I approached; ‘come and see what I have here for you!’ But no voice answered mine—no light footsteps reached my ear—no coronal of roses came borne along from the entrance of our cottage home, as I had fondly expected, to meet my eager eyes. I rushed into the hut; but though I could no more have beheld her than I did, even had she been there, yet I felt an instant conviction that no Velata was near—no loved being was present, I had learned the instinctive perception of a blind man—and too well I knew that no soft breathing, no light rustle, none of the subtle essence, the very atmosphere that betrays the presence of the one beloved object, was there to bless me.

“I believe I uttered a wild scream in the impotence of my anguish, and first despair, for I felt struck to the earth by this unexpected blow. I wrung my hands, and hot tears fell from my eyes, as I incoherently called upon her name, and bade her remember that I could not seek her—and that unless she took pity on my misery, and returned, and manifested herself to me, I must perish in my forlorn grief. In short, I committed extravagances that I should be ashamed to think upon since, did I not know how the most manly natures are subdued by a sudden as well as severe stroke of sorrow. At the

same time, I will own, that my yielding so utterly to my misery was weak and wicked; and the only circumstance I can reflect upon with complacency in that period of my unhappiness was, that instead of looking upon the white dove with resentment, as the cause of my detention, and consequent misfortune, I cherished it carefully, binding its wounded wing, and endeavouring to extract some comfort from a deed of charity and tenderness.

“After wandering restlessly, blindly, and vainly, about, everywhere in Velata’s wonted haunts, and taking a sort of fierce pains to prove to myself that I had really and hopelessly lost her, I sunk at length stunned and exhausted upon the mossy seat beneath the tree, where I had that very morning received the assurance that made me a happy husband, and had opened to me the blissful prospect of a life-long wedded existence. Nature wore her loveliest aspect of beauty and serenity—the one star of evening shone forth mild and lustrous—the unclouded heavens embraced earth with their azure expanse—and all things seemed held in loving silent communion; what a contrast did this scene, in its holy tranquillity, present to the storm of tumultuous emotions that were contending within my own sore and troubled heart!

“Long I strove for a more submissive spirit; fervently did I pray for calm and resignation, that I might bear my trial as became a man, and the creature of God’s will. I bent myself prostrate to his decree, and humbly besought his mercy to the bruised

heart that laid itself trustfully open to his healing care.

“The radiant Hesperus shed its bland influence upon my upturned eyes, and I felt as if a gracious power had vouchsafed encouragement, protection, and consolation. I arose meekly, and went into the hut, with a calmer spirit, though without hope of rest. But as I flung myself upon my couch of skins, I found a half-blown rose, that lay upon the pillow.

“I seized the precious token, as a harbinger of hope and comfort, for well I knew whose hand must have placed it there. I inhaled its delicious perfume, and steeped my senses in the ecstasy of the belief it conveyed that I was remembered and beloved, however inexplicably abandoned.

“My rose lay close to my heart that night; it has lain there ever since, nor will it ever quit its place but with life,” said the old mariner, in a low voice, and covering his eyes for a moment with his wrinkled hand. “Its once ruddy leaves are now colourless and withered, but the memories that hallow the slight fragments will be ever fresh and vivid, till the heart, close to which they lie, shall cease to beat.”

After a short pause he resumed:—“The effort I had so strenuously made to endure my bereavement with becoming fortitude, was much strengthened by this circumstance, and I laboured hard to resist a recurrence of the despondency which had so completely overwhelmed and unmanned me at first. I strove by physical exertion to repel the attacks of mental

suffering. I worked all day zealously and incessantly, and by manual labour endeavoured to drive away reflection. I joined invention and contrivance to the mere work of my hands, and by occupying my thoughts with the shaping and fashioning of some useful article, I tried to prevent their being more sadly employed in reverting to my loss.

“But each evening, when I could no longer see to toil, and I sought rest on the mossy seat beneath the tree, then it was that my sense of loveliness pressed most heavily upon me, and the remembrance of my lost bride stung me to the heart. Her manifold perfections of nature, her gentle sweetness, her endearing qualities, her fostering love, all passed in review before my mind, and filled me with irrepresible regret to have known the worth of such a creature only to part with her for ever.

“It was singular that this being, whom I had never beheld, should so completely have won my affections, so entirely have filled my senses with her image, so absorbingly have taken possession of my very soul. But it seemed as if the strong appeal which her invisibility made to my imaginative nature, rendered her doubly and trebly dear; as the man who has lost his sight, frequently possesses his other senses in an unusual degree of acuteness, so appeared to be the concentrated enthusiam of my love for the unseen Velata.

“As I sat musing thus one evening, my eyes fixed upon the bright planet, and my thoughts absorbed in her image, who was the earthly star of my existence

—remote—mystically set apart—and unattainable—I helplessly breathed aloud her name:—‘My Velata!’

“At that instant a light quick footstep struck upon my ear, as it bounded along the sward; and the next moment I felt a womanly form fling itself upon my bosom, and nestle within my arms, which closed instinctively around her in a transport of recognition.

“‘Velata! my Velata!’ was all I could utter for some time in reply to the piteous sobs, and murmurs of mingled joy and sorrow which she continued to pour forth upon my breast.

“‘Let me hear that beloved voice—let me be sure you are here, my Velata! Give me some assurance of your dear presence besides sobs and murmurs!’ I cried.

“‘I grieve to think of your grief, my husband, who were left to deplore my absence without knowing its cause,’ said the melodious tones I knew so well. ‘But our misery is past now, and I will give no one moment longer to sorrow. You wish some assurance of my presence, do you?’ continued she, with her old playful gaiety; ‘here, what think you of this?’

“She pinched my cheek smartly as she spoke; then soothingly passing her soft hand over it, as a child might do, to make it well, she proceeded to inform me of the reason of her abrupt departure on our bridal day.

“‘You had scarcely quitted me, and taken the direction of the wood, to fetch the fruit for our nup-

tial feast,' she said, 'when, from the opposite quarter, which you know is the slope that leads down to the sea-shore, I perceived two people of my own nation approaching the hut, whom I immediately recognised for my friend Nascosta, and her lover, Bruno. Nascosta is the young girl I mentioned to you with whose parents I lived after my father's death, and who was one of my companions when we came to this island on the occasion of the vernal festival. She was well acquainted with all the circumstances of the estrangement that existed between my mother and myself; indeed, it was owing to her and her parents' conviction of the injustice with which I was treated by my own surviving one, that led to their offering me an asylum after the loss of my father. But she told me that my mother had been seized with a sudden and violent illness, which was so dangerous in its nature, that there was no likelihood of her recovery. In the remorse and clearer-sighted conscience of a near prospect of death, she had raved incessantly of her former unkindness to her only child, and had vehemently petitioned that her daughter would return and forgive her before she quitted earth for ever. Nascosta, knowing how bitterly I had always deplored the want of a mother's affection, felt that no time was to be lost in fetching me to her side; and, knowing where I was, had set out immediately to seek me in her lover's canoe. This now awaited my instant return, for my friend assured me that it was all we should be able to do, to reach our native island in time to forestal the fatal hand of

death. A mother's dying voice rung suppliant in my ears; it adjured me to fly without delay; every moment that elapsed seemed to sound a knell to my hopes of being able to lighten her departing hour with the assurance of my filial love, and to receive her last—and alas, almost only—blessing before she should be removed for ever. I could not hesitate—I would not trust myself to think of you, my husband, in that moment of contending duty; hastily gathering a rose, and placing it as a token of ever-constant wedded love, where I knew it must reach your hand, and (as I fervently trusted) convey comfort and assurance to your heart, I followed my friends to the boat. My courageous conquest over myself in this sharp struggle of conflicting feelings, met with its reward in my timely arrival at my mother's feet while she was yet alive. We exchanged consoling assurances, embraces, and words of loving-kindness, such as at one time I never hoped to receive from my mother; and I had the blessed conviction that my return had been the means of causing her to die happy and contented. But I had no sooner received her last sigh, than I flew back to the spot where a faithful heart awaited me—I feared, in anxiety and alarm at my unaccountable absence. In short, I am returned—your wife is returned—never more to part from her beloved husband.'

“Her tender voice ceased, and I felt her kind arms steal round my neck, while I encircled her waist with mine, and drew her close to my heart. The shades of evening had quite closed in, and my passionate

yearning to look upon my bride was strangely appeased by the thought that I was now no less happy than any other earthly lover, whose mistress is veiled from his sense of sight by night's darkness, and whom he can behold by the light of love and imagination alone.

“But I perceive the darkness is gaining upon us also, my dears,” said the old mariner to his young friends; so he bade them “good night,” with a promise of resuming the thread of his yarn next evening.

CHAPTER XII.

THE NORTHERN SEAS. — THE GIGANTIC WANDERER. — THE
KRAKEN. — THE SEA SERPENT. — THE ALBATROSS. — THE
MERMAID. — THE GROTTA. — THE SUBTERRANEAN JOURNEY.
—THE NATION OF THE ANTHROPOPHAGI.—CONCLUSION.

“Now, dear Kit,” said the young Swallows on the following evening, as they entered the old mariner’s cottage, and took their usual seats, “pray tell us something more about the Island of Ombrosa, and about your invisible wife.”

“Alas! my dears,” replied their old friend, “I have not much more to tell you of that yarn; it was a happy time indeed, while it lasted, but heaven decreed that such tranquil felicity as I enjoyed in the society of my dear Velata, was not long to endure for such an inveterate wanderer as myself. But, meanwhile, the days, weeks, and months of my married life flew by in uninterrupted joy and serenity. My wife, imperceptible though she might be to my vision, was yet palpably present in her goodness, her gentleness, her affectionate nature, and her ever-watchful love for me; while my attachment for her was so powerful that, though I could not be said to keep her ever in my sight, yet I contrived that we should never be long absent from each other. We

wandered over our beautiful island together; we laboured together to lavish all kinds of luxuries and ornaments upon our homestead, the rustic hut; we sought together the needful provision for our daily repasts, which were plentifully supplied with game by means of Velata's bow-and-arrows, with fish by nets of my making and casting, and with fruit and vegetables, the profuse production of this fertile island; and we even set about building a canoe together, which should transport us to Velata's native island. It was one of her pleasant anticipations that we should proceed thither, in order that she might enjoy the triumph of presenting the husband she loved so well to her friends Nascosta and Bruno; while she looked forward to the delight of watching my perplexity and amusement when I should be among a nation of invisible people. She indulged in a thousand whimsical fancies about my expected wonder to see numberless offices performed by unseen means, as well as to hear remarks, conversation, singing, and talking, all going on around me, without my being able to perceive the persons from whom the sounds proceeded.

“But this airy castle-building of hers was destined never to be realised. One fatal morning, the very day we had fixed to set forth in our canoe, or rather raft, for it resembled the latter more, in its flat form, Velata complained of unusual lassitude, and did not rise from her couch as early as was her wont. I hastened to compose some cooling draught of herbs under her direction, but her fever increased, and

before evening she was delirious. The whole of that miserable night I listened to her murmured wanderings, and did my best to soothe her disturbed fancies, to moisten her parched lips, and to fan her burning brow. As the sun arose, her words suddenly grew more coherent, and I indulged a hope that she was recovering; but as I leaned over her, and softly whispered this hope, she replied in such a manner as to deprive me of any.

“She spoke rationally, indeed, and calmly; but it was with the calmness of despair at the conviction that she was about to quit me for ever on this earth. She roused herself, however, to speak consoling words to me, and bade me trust that though we were forbidden to remain longer united here, yet that we should hereafter be permitted to meet in eternal bliss, if we encouraged that trust, and behaved consonantly with the virtuous fortitude it inspired. In short, in her last moments, as in all of those that had elapsed during our intercourse, did this admirable creature forget herself to minister to me and my comfort.

“I controlled the transports of my grief as I best could, in order that I might spare her the anguish of witnessing mine; and I will not even sadden your young hearts, my dears, by dwelling upon the agony which wrung my soul, as I felt that beloved hand grow cold within my own, as I listened to the last deep-drawn breathings that fluttered from those lips, and as I counted the last flickering pulses that throbbed within that dear gentle bosom. Suffice it, that she

died—suffice it, that I lost my Velata—that I enclosed her cold remains within our rustic home, which thus formed a bowery mausoleum for my bride; it had been the temple of our wedded happiness, and was now the tomb of all my love and hope, from which I fled, a distracted miserable wanderer for evermore.

“That very day, in the very first wildness of my sorrow, bewildered, and conscious only of the deep sense of my bereavement, I set forth upon the wide ocean, as if I could escape from my cruel loneliness by leaving the scenes which reminded me of all that I had lost. In vain! alone—evermore alone—has been the one haunting idea that has unceasingly beset my existence since that fatal day. I have borne my part in the world—I have mingled with my fellow-men—I have entered into their joys and sorrows with interest and zeal—but my heart has ever remained true to the image of my wife, my Velata, as if she were only the more deeply impressed upon my soul, from her having been invisible to my sight.”

The old mariner paused; then resumed: “Well, my dears, my raft bore me on from day to day amid those lonely seas, my course undirected, my progress unheeded, my object undecided, so aimless were my intentions, so utterly dead to all thought or care for the future was my desolate spirit. I wandered on and on, unchecked by adverse weather, for the climate was beautiful, and it was then the fine season. I never felt tempted to land, for no shore did I ap-

proach for a long indefinite period. I took no count of time, but merely dropped asleep during some of the hours of darkness, when my bruised heart sunk exhausted with watching its misery; and I took occasionally enough nourishment to keep life in me, when the natural pangs of hunger and thirst grew sufficiently importunate to press upon my attention. I should tell you, that the raft had been amply stocked with provision, in the prospect of our intended journey, which I mentioned to you as having been fixed for the very day on which I left Ombrosa, so that, as it happened, I was well supplied in a particular which otherwise I should have certainly failed in, had it depended on my own subsequent exertions. I had been wandering thus some time, when the temperature altered considerably; it became intensely cold, and the vast floating masses of ice that I now occasionally encountered, shewed that my frail vessel had been wafted towards the frozen regions of the North. Indeed, it was singularly providential that I never came into collision with any of these icebergs, for if I had, or my raft had unhappily got between some of them, I might have perished helplessly.

“ Showers of sleet, clinging fogs, and frequent hazy mists, varied by falling snow, and piercing winds, now daily beset my course among these dreary seas, and awoke me to a sense of extreme bodily discomfort amid the oppression of my internal suffering. Yet I scarcely made an effort to change the direction of my progress, but permitted myself to be conducted on, and on, and on, at the caprice of the winds and

waves; these still continued to bear me northward, and still the snows thickened, the gloomy haze deepened, and the cold increased to a degree of intense severity. One day my little vessel was proceeding through a narrow channel that lay between a vast extent of spacious ice-fields; I know not how it had found its way into this confined water-course, but while I was noticing that it had done so, and was gazing over the dreary plains that stretched away on either side of me, I was startled at an unexpected vision in the midst of this dismal solitude. I beheld a sort of low carriage, fixed on a sledge, and drawn by dogs; it was occupied by a being, bearing the shape of a man of gigantic stature, and who guided the dogs at a furious pace along the ice-fields. The rate was so rapid at which this strange traveller passed me (which he did without seeming to perceive me), that I could only obtain a very imperfect view of his face and figure; but what I beheld of them appalled me so entirely that I had no thought of shouting to him, or of attempting to check his progress in any way. His countenance seemed to be a frightful mask of yellow skin that scarcely covered the muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was dark, and hung in long ragged locks, his teeth were glaring, his eyes watery and dun-coloured, and his lips straight and black; while his form, which, as I have said, was of gigantic stature, was uncouth and distorted in its proportions; and the one huge hand that was next to me, and grasped the reins, was in colour and apparent texture like that of a mummy. This hideous being

passed like a terrible spectre, and left me with the conviction that I had seen the very creature once fashioned by the daring hand of a mortal, presumptuously ambitious in its endeavour to wield a power reserved alone for the Most High. I remembered how I had heard Mary, the wife of one of my early shipmates, Percy Shelton, relate an affecting story of the fatal consequences of this intemperate ill-directed ambition on the part of a young student in the University of Ingolstadt; and I could not but believe that I had just beheld the work of Victor Frankenstein's hands—at once his creature, his victim, and the bane of his own existence. As I recalled the unhappy circumstances that marked the career of these two beings, the instruments of each other's misery, the mutual blighters of each other's hopes and aspirations, I received a certain consolation in the thought that remorse, that unappeasable, never-dying sting, had no share in the sufferings that consumed my heart, and I uttered the first fervent thanksgiving that I had been able to join with my prayers since I had lost my *Velata*.

“After I had pursued the course of the narrow channel, which seemed to me to be formed by a rift or strait chasm across a vast ice-field, I found that I emerged into an open sea, in which drifted many smaller icebergs, that occasionally menaced my raft, but fortunately never injured it. Once I encountered an object, which I at first took to be one of these floating masses, but on a nearer approach it proved to be a slumbering kraken, which, when I

came in contact with it, suddenly dived, nearly drawing my luckless vessel into the whirlpool, which this huge monster of the deep causes in its descent amid the waters. Another peril I narrowly escaped, too, was from the jaws of the sea-serpent, that I one day beheld rearing its awful crest many feet above the surface of the waters, and glaring round as if in search of prey; but, to my great relief, it bent its terrible head again, and glided away beneath the watery abyss, and I saw it no more.

“Very frequently my path was illumined by the grand coruscations, the mysterious varied motions and colours of the Aurora Borealis. Sometimes they bespread with rich magnificence the whole skiey region; sometimes they shot in long waving bands of light, in lofty pyramidal shapes, or undulating columns, rapidly changing their shape and colour, and shifting their position with wonderful rapidity; suddenly they would capriciously vanish, leaving the heavens pitch dark, and anon they would return, startlingly and vividly resplendent.

“But, generally, I floated on amid these polar solitudes, in a cheerless monotony of dark grey waters, of dull green icebergs, of heaped snow lying in congealed ponderous masses, with nought overhead but a sombre sky, obscured by haze, clouds, mist, or fog. A dreary silence reigned around, save when it was broken by the roaring of the storm-blast, or the sudden riving of some distant ice-rock, which pealed through those vast desolate regions like a thunder-roll.

“ Sometimes, when drifting along on the skirts of some spacious icefield, I could perceive a wandering seal, with its mute, half-human gentleness of look that seemed to appeal to my sympathy, and smote upon a chord of tenderness in my heart, that I fancied had been dead within me; at other times, I noted otters, Arctic foxes, wolves, and bears, with now and then a stately rein-deer, that would come and fix his mild wandering eyes upon me, and stand at gaze, as my solitary craft floated unwonted by him.

The numerous wild-fowl that abound in those regions, with an occasional hare, supplied me with food; for in the raft, when I quitted Ombrosa, were Velata's bow-and-arrows, so that I was fortunately enabled to secure the means of subsistence; while the small fragments of fresh-water ice that splintered from the cavities of icebergs, and which I took care to collect as they floated by me on the surface of the waters, afforded me refreshing beverage.

“ Once, as I was preparing to take aim at a strange sea-bird that flew across an icefield, close to which my raft was creeping, my hand was suddenly arrested by a sound that made my heart stand still. It seemed to be uttered by a human voice, but so impressive were its tones, so full of terror and awe was its thrilling note of warning, that my bow fell like lead at my feet, my nerveless arms dropped at my side, while my look, which had been fixed upon my intended quarry, was stricken down, and encountered a figure that stood upon the brink of the icy plain before me. It was that of an aged man, with a grey

beard, a lank brown face, a glittering eye, and a skinny hand, which he stretched forth towards me, in eager sign of detention. I felt as if held to the spot by both eye and hand, while I marked that round his neck was hung a slain bird, an albatross, similar to the one I had just before marked as my prey: but the raft beneath me yielding to the impulse of the retiring waves, I was borne speedily away from a presence and influence that made me shudder with instinctive dread, notwithstanding the yearning I was beginning to feel for renewed intercourse with my human kindred.

“One day, when the weather was unusually clear, the sky brighter, and the sun actually shining upon the icebergs, causing them to look like huge blocks of emerald, while the heaps of snow sparkled and dazzled in the welcome radiance, I beheld an object at a little distance, which, on my nearer approach, proved to be a young damsel asleep. She lay in a strange position; her head resting upon her folded arms, as she leaned against a low ledge of rock, whilst the lower part of her person remained floating in the water. Her face was concealed by her attitude, no less than by her hair, which streamed luxuriantly over her neck and shoulders, and only partially revealed the pure whiteness of her skin.

“Whilst I was gazing in astonishment at this beautiful, and very unexpected sight, my attention was diverted, by hearing a deep growl; and presently, I beheld a large white bear making directly towards

the spot where the sleeping damsel couched. I snatched up my bow and arrows, and springing from my raft on to the shelvy rock, I aimed a shaft right at the animal's eye. Fortunately I struck him precisely where I intended, and the beast, uttering a savage yell, retreated, just as the damsel awoke. She shrieked piercingly, when she discovered the danger she had been in; but instead of rising from her half-recumbent position, she let herself gently slide away from the ledge against which she had been leaning; and to my great surprise, remained floating upright in the water, the surface of which reached her waist. She did not, however, leave the shore, but kept buoyantly still, like a graceful vessel at anchor; while, by expressive looks and gestures of gratitude, she seemed to acknowledge the share I had had in her preservation from the bear. I endeavoured, by signs, to induce her to come on shore, but she smiled, shook her head, and beckoned to me in her turn. I now looked round for my raft, as a means of reaching her; but what was my dismay, on discovering that it had drifted away, when I had quitted it so suddenly to prevent the menaced attack upon the damsel. She seemed to divine the cause of my anxiety, but she only smiled as before, and then exchanged her beckoning for a waving motion of the hand, while she floated gently by the edge of the shore, pointing to me to proceed along it in the same direction. I obeyed her guidance, keeping my eyes on my singular conductress, who maintained her watery way, now wafted on in liquid ease, now cutting

and dashing through clouds of spray, which she raised in sportive frolic, and now again resuming her more serene course. Presently a full melodious cadence swelled upon the waters, and I heard her chaunt the following verse:—

‘ Under the booming wave
And on the whirling foam,
We merry Mermaids have
Our wide and watery home.
Down, down, down, we go,
The coral reefs below,
When storms and tempests rave.
‘ But when the sun is on the sea,
And the wind is in his cave,
From our deep-blue beds we come,
Floating on the sea-green lea.
And then we dance, and flaunt, and sing
To the sea-nymphs’ gambolling.

‘ And now, hark, hark !
The sea-dogs bark,
At the rouse of old Triton’s horn.
‘ Hark away ! hark away !
The dolphin’s in view,
And sea-tiger too,
And flying-fish all forlorn.
Through foam and spray,
Hark away ! hark away !
Oh ! merry the life we Mermaids lead
On the rolling brine,
In the jolly sunshine.’

“ We proceeded thus some distance together, the Mermaid floating onwards, sporting and singing, and waving to me, whilst I kept pace with her along the

rocky shore; until at length the ground became more broken, the rocks assumed a more elevated aspect, and I found that we were approaching a lofty grotto, or cavern, that was formed of irregularly-shaped columns, and massive crags, with chasms, and vaulted depths that looked like the arched amplitude of a cathedral. Brilliant spars of many colours glittered in all directions; drooping stalactites and slender icicles hung in profusion from the pillars, and adorned the sides with rich fretwork; wreaths of frozen snow flung their garlands from point to point, and took a thousand fantastic shapes of beauty and grace.

“So colossal were the dimensions of this grand natural temple, that it not only stretched far into the ocean, where the watery plain formed its translucent floor, but its caverns extended for some distance inland, and comprised arcades, recesses, galleries, and chambers of vast height and width, beneath its capacious roof. Into that portion of the grotto which over-arched the sea, my guiding Mermaiden took her way; and soon, from amid the crags and columns on every side there rushed a troop of little ones, all eager to greet and welcome their elder sister—for such she seemed to be. Great was the bustle, infinite the splashings, quick the watery dartings and divings, voluble the chatter, merry the shoutings, shrill the questionings and shriekings that arose among the little people as they seemed to learn the tale of their sister’s peril and rescue. Then, from one of the craggy recesses of the grotto,

came an aged Merman, who seemed to be the father of the troop; and then the shoutings, the bustlings, and the paddlings to and fro were renewed with greater vigour than ever; and then the tale of their sister's adventure was repeated again and again, amid a chorus of shrill voices, that arose in clamorous prattling, and giggling shrieks; and then the old Merman took his rescued daughter in his arms, and she flung hers round his neck, and there was a general hubbub of delight and congratulation. Presently there seemed to be a universal desire to see and thank the deliverer of this dear member of their family; for, in an instant, the whole troop of Mer-folks, from the old Mer-father, down to the youngest Mer-child, came dashing, splashing, and flashing through the water towards the portion of the grotto which canopied the shore where I stood. As they crowded onwards in hasty confusion, some cleaving the water straight before them, others darting athwart their course, some cutting in with a whirling motion that sent up a shower of feathery spray, many rushing and rippling in tumultuous struggle, some diving with a quick plash and a gurgle, several plunging forward with a sudden spring, while all were shrilly uproarious; they seemed like a flock of hungry water-fowl pressing to the brink to be fed. I could not help smiling at the fancy, and felt half-inclined to fling some bread-crumbs (if I had had any) amongst the mad-cap crew; but indeed, situated as we were, it was I who was likely to be indebted to them for food and protection, and not they to me.

And so it proved: grateful for the service I had rendered their beloved sister,—who played the part of a fostering mother to her widowed father's numerous offspring,—these kind Mer-people made me welcome among them, and shewed me unceasing kindness and hospitality. They installed me in the land-portion of the spacious grotto, took pleasure in using every effort to render me comfortable, and were indefatigable in their endeavours to make me feel at home. As for my first acquaintance, the damsel, she at once appointed herself as the superintendant of my domestic arrangements; and no common bar-maid, chamber-maid, cook-maid, house-maid, stillroom-maid, parlour-maid, dairy-maid, laundry-maid, or even maid-of-all-work, could equal in housewifely accomplishment my Mer-maid.

“Her fore-thought, her order, her contrivance, her management, were admirable; and her attention to my comforts, was as ceaseless as it was judicious and considerate. At first, when she did not know that I might not object to them as troublesome, she would not allow her little brothers and sisters, the younger Mer-children, to intrude upon my portion of the grotto at all; but, at length, when she found that their infantine gambols and mirth served to win me from the melancholy that at first possessed me, she permitted them to be with me as much as we chose. Pleasant, frolicsome little creatures they were—these Mer-children! Gay, sportive, good-humoured, and happy, they soon made me as fond of them, as they were of each other; and it was not long before they

grew as familiar and affectionate with me, as I was pleased with my new companions. Of a morning, when I clapped my hands, and shouted, 'Hallo, my Merrimen all!' they would come flocking in a shoal to my cave, and wait there at the brink of the entrance, bobbing and floating, and paddling and popping up and down like so many corks; waiting until I should lift them out of the water one by one, and bring them over to my breakfast-table. There was much flapping of their scaly tails, and a great deal of merry laughter at the awkward way in which they were obliged to shuffle along on the dry land—the floor of my portion of the grotto; and infinite were the scramblings, and pushings, and slidings, and hustlings, that took place before it could be decided which of the troop was to be the fortunate occupier of my lap—the scuffle most frequently ending in my eating my meal with one on each knee, a third clinging to my arm, with two others of the slippery rogues holding on as well as they could, and peeping over my shoulders. While the smaller fry were thus engaged, the elder ones would be occupied with their sister in setting forth my breakfast-table, which was generally supplied with a variety of delicacies, provided by their hospitable exertions. Bear-hams, steaks from the sea-cow, reindeer cutlets, tern eggs, rolls made of a kind of moss or lichen, with heaps of a luscious red berry, something like our raspberry, covered the board in tempting profusion; and in the centre there was always hot water in a large conch-shell, which, with its

graceful shape and contents, might have passed for a steaming tea-urn, had I not been unprovided with tea or sugar, to make it available for that purpose. This water, however,—which was obtained from a neighbouring hot-spring,—was a great luxury to me, and inspired, at first, thoughts of shaving, that I might get rid of some of the huge growth of beard that had accumulated upon my chin during my wanderings; but I soon recollected that I had no razor or soap, and that I must content myself with the comfort it afforded of warm ablution, as well as the convenience of boiling my eggs at breakfast.

“I thus spent some time in a very jolly manner, with my little Merrimen, and their sister Merry, as I called them; until one day, when I was exploring the depths of the grotto, and seeking to become acquainted with every nook and recess of its vast extent, I became entangled in the labyrinth of caverns, and found that I could by no means find my way back to that portion inhabited by the Mermaid and her family. Deeper and deeper did I plunge in the inextricable maze of subterranean passages that branched away in endless succession; farther and farther did I involve myself in their intricate windings, their perplexing continuance; and fainter and fainter became my hope of return. I should tell you that I fortunately had with me a lamp, which I had constructed from a shell, and filled with whale oil, that I might be provided with light during my proposed investigation of the grotto's extent. I had

imagined that my project would occupy me some time, so that I had taken care to let my supply of oil be ample; but I now began to be seriously uneasy when I found how far I was exceeding the length of time I had calculated upon for my absence. Many hours elapsed, and I instinctively felt that I was still rambling away from the point I wished to gain, instead of recovering its right direction. My anxiety interfered to prevent my enjoying, as I should otherwise have done, the beauty and magnificence of the path I was traversing, but I could not be wholly insensible to its grandeur. The lamp I held in my hand shed its rays upon the sides of the caverns through which I passed, and shewed me that they were not less varied in their colour and structure, than they were fantastic and imposing in their form.

“Now the lamp-light would be reflected from huge masses of rock that blazed and sparkled with a thousand diamond points; anon it would be tinted with a pervading glow of red, as I entered a space that looked like a vault formed of an entire carbuncle; this would change to a brilliant green as I wandered through an arcade of emerald pillars; then flashes of golden light would burst upon my view, as I found myself in a stately hall of topaz; and next would appear a roof studded with sapphires, amethysts, and rubies. Still, as I went on, I encountered lofty galleries, with polished marble walls—now of purest white, anon streaked and mottled, then of all the varied hues of green, yellow, and red;—then came a

narrower passage, fretted and bossed with silver; which widened and towered into a spacious granite chamber, smooth and unornate as a Druidical monument, piled together in primitive simplicity; and this was succeeded by groups of columns, surmounted by graceful arches, that sprang airily and symmetrically upwards, as if devised by architectural taste, while they supported a roof that dropped at intervals in pendant fretwork, looking as if sustained by the magic of skill alone. From this florid beauty, and regularity of conformation, I emerged upon rude heaps of primæval rock that led in shapeless uninteresting monotony for some distance; and then my lamp suddenly reflected a lurid dun-red glare, and I felt as if I were entering a furnace, while the glowing copper-coloured hue struck upon my eyes with almost the effect of heat; this was succeeded by a cavern, gloomy, dull, and leaden in its aspect; then another, heavily and richly encrusted with gold; the next, shone bright and dazzling with polished brass; the next, and the next, frowned murkily in alternate blocks of sullen copper and wan lead; and these opened upon a space resplendent with the vivid blue of the lapis lazuli.

“I stopped for a moment to admire the brilliant effect of this superb azure apartment: and also to relieve in a measure the sense of weariness and exhaustion that had for some time been gaining upon me, and marking significantly the length of my wanderings. As I paused and held the lamp above my head, the better to examine the beauty of the place,

there was a flash,—a feeble leap up of the flame, which caused the rich blue of the ponderous walls apparently to vibrate and tremble for an instant,—then a slight drop, and waning of the light, which seemed to steady them in momentary shadow—another reviving flicker,—and then the flame seemed to detach itself, and flit hovering just above the wick of my lamp; whilst I watched it with a thrill of horror, at the thought that in a few seconds I should be left in darkness, amidst this subterranean labyrinth, I cast my eyes around me once more, with a last hope that I might discover some means of egress; and I beheld at a few paces from me a kind of rude portal, towards which I softly crept, involuntarily careful lest the slightest motion should shorten the existence of my expiring light. I had but just time to ascertain that the spot I approached, led to a rough rocky passage, when the lamp went quite out. But the agony with which I saw this, was quickly succeeded by an emotion of pleasure, as I fancied I perceived that it had been extinguished by a puff of air! Yes, I could, the next moment, plainly distinguish the exquisite sensation of air, pure, fresh, open air, actually playing upon my cheek. I rapturously welcomed it. If to the invalid, long confined to his sick-room,—to the prisoner immured in a dungeon,—the return of fresh air be dear, how ineffably precious must the sense of its presence have been at that instant to me! I who, immediately previous, had been plunged in the despairing belief that I was doomed to be buried alive in these subterranean caverns!

“I staggered in the direction of the welcome current, and as I gazed through the surrounding obscurity I became aware of a small point of light that seemed to be at a great distance. I kept this in view, as my guiding star, and at length beheld it widen and widen, and brighten and brighten, until at length I found it proceed from an opening in the rock, which led me out upon a broad level country. I had not quite emerged from the shelter of the rocky entrance, when I paused to reconnoitre the scene in which I found myself.

“I discovered that I was on the verge of a desert plain, that looked utterly desolate, wild, and sterile. Not very far from the rocks beneath which I stood, there was a rude fire of sticks and logs, with a still ruder attempt at a spit, upon which seemed to be roasting some kind of joint. On the ground near, there crouched a heap of garments, as if some human being sat huddled beneath, engaged in watching the roast; while at a little distance lay strewed fragments of flesh and bones, that I could not help, with a shudder, believing to be those of a human being also.

“I fancy I made some half-articulate exclamation of horror, as this belief crossed my mind; for the heap of garments stirred, rose up, and came towards me. This strange figure bore the appearance of a large cloak hung upon a prop, and moving of its own accord; but I could see legs beneath the drapery, and presently an arm protruded itself. Then the hand belonging to the arm dived again for an instant

beneath the clothes, and re-appeared, bearing a hat, which it waved courteously, while the figure stooped, and bent towards me, as if bowing. But when the hand prepared to replace the hat, the cloak was somewhat thrown back, and I could perceive a grinning face and head beneath the left shoulder of the figure; who, by its gestures, now plainly proposed that I should approach and partake of his inhuman human feast. I was considering how I might best decline this polite but sickening invitation, when I perceived—

“But I declare,” said Kit, interrupting himself, “there are your father and mother coming through the garden gate, yonder!”

“We are sorry to cut the thread of your yarns, my dear fellow,” said Captain Swallow, as he and his wife entered the old mariner’s cottage, “but we have just received a letter from London, bidding us hasten up to town to-morrow. Their grandmamma is anxious to see Fanny and Dick before he goes back to school, and as my mother is going to the sea-side in a few days, we shall be able to have but a short visit, even if we set off immediately.”

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Nevertheless, now that the gratification was thus abruptly announced, Dick and Fanny felt that they should have to relinquish another for it; for though they were as anxious as ever to go and see their grandmamma, they did not like the thought of leaving their old friend Kit, who had endeared himself greatly to them, by the way in which he had, evening after evening, indulged their favourite inclination for "a long story."

"Besides, you know, Kit," said Dick,—after he and his sister had endeavoured to express some of these feelings of mingled gratitude and disappointment,—“besides, you have never told us a word about how you first met with my father; Fanny and I want particularly to hear all about the time when you and he were shipmates together, and of the voyages you made, and the adventures you met with in his company.”

“They must be for some other time, my dear lad,” said Kit; “meanwhile, I can only trust that the old mariner’s adventures may have imparted to your sister and yourself, in their relation, some of the happiness which, in their occurrence, they afforded to himself; I shall be pleased to think that his yarns excited your imagination, while they stimulated your faith in the duties of patience, courage, endurance, and persevering hope; that while they amused your fancy, they encouraged you to depend upon your good sense, and your energies both intellectual and physical, in perilous emergency; and that while you were beguiling the twilight hours with

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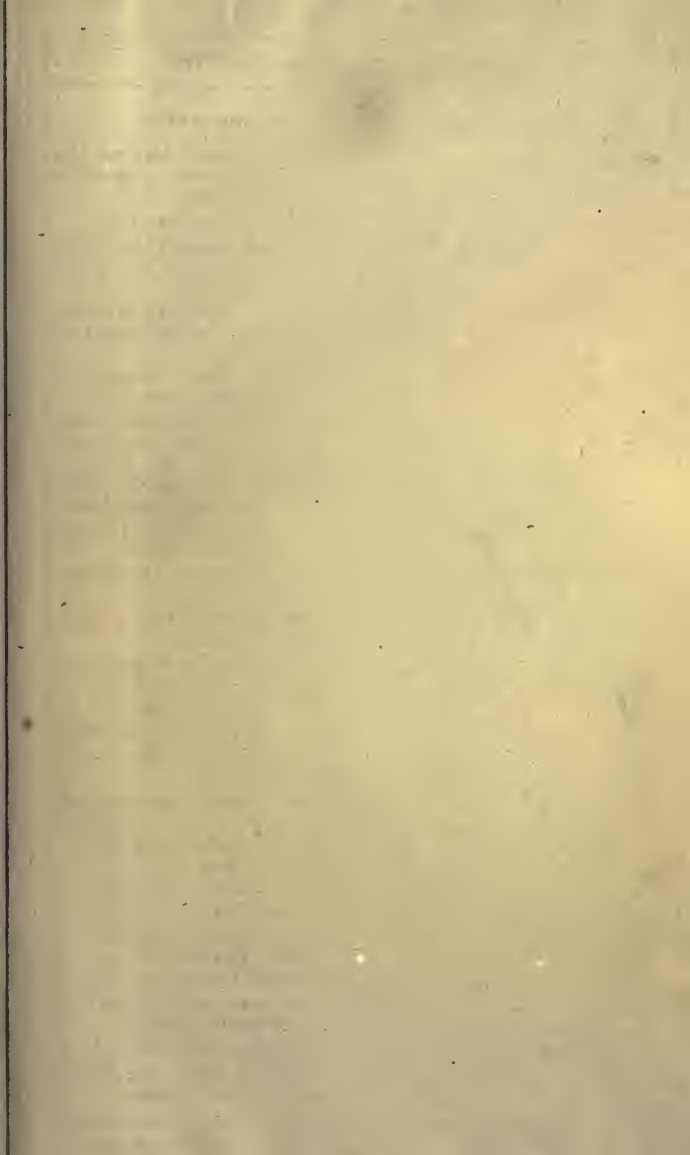
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